

Muslim Spain and Portugal

A Political History of al-Andalus

HUGH KENNEDY

First published 1996 by Pearson Education Limited

Published 2014 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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ISBN 978-0-582-49515-9 (pbk)

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Kennedy, Hugh (Hugh N.)

Muslim Spain and Portugal : a political history of Al-Andalus /
Hugh Kennedy.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-582-49515-6 (PPR).—ISBN 0-582-29968-3 (CSD)

1. Spain—History—711-1516. 2. Muslims—Spain—History.
3. Portugal—History—To 1385. 4. Muslims—Portugal—History.

I. Title.

DP102.K46 1996

946'02—dc20

96-22764

CIP

Set by 35 in Baskerville 10/12pt

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This book is dedicated to my daughter
Katharine, in memory of happy days in
Ubeda and Granada.

Acknowledgements

It is with genuine and heartfelt pleasure that I wish to acknowledge the help and encouragement given to me in the writing of this book by colleagues in Spain. In this context I would particularly like to mention Eduardo Manzano Moreno, Maribel Fierro, Manuela Marin and Mercedes Garcia-Arenal who have welcomed me at the Concejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas in Madrid, encouraged me in this work and introduced me to the writings of other Spanish authorities which I might otherwise have neglected. It has been a privilege to work with such a lively and interesting group of scholars.

I owe a major debt of gratitude to Andrew MacLennan of Longman, without whose encouragement this book would never have been written and without whose patience it might well have been cut off before it could be finished. It is easy to forget how important enthusiastic and knowledgeable history editors, like Andrew, are in the development of the subject.

I would also like to thank generations of St Andrews students who have sat through my courses on Christian and Muslim Spain and provided both audience and critique for many of the ideas presented here. My colleagues in the Department of Mediaeval History here have made this possible by encouraging the development of courses on Islamic History. I am grateful to the School of History for providing funds for visiting Spain and to Rob Bartlett for his companionship on a trip through the more remote parts of Extremadura. As always I must thank Helen and Robert Irwin for providing such a welcoming base in London. And last but not least my wife Hilary, for unfailing love and encouragement.

Note on Names and Dates

I have tried to make this book user-friendly to non-Arabists while remaining faithful to the evidence. Personal names are transliterated according to the *Cambridge History of Islam* system, now generally used in English language publications. Place-names are given in the modern Spanish and Portuguese forms for the Iberian peninsula, and standard modern transliterations for North Africa. Al-Andalus refers to those areas of the Iberian peninsula which were under Muslim rule at the time being described, so that, for example, it is much smaller in 1200 than in 1000. Andalucia always refers to the modern region of that name. I have used the English term Morocco to describe that part of the Maghreb which lies within the boundaries of the modern kingdom but which was known to the Muslims of al-Andalus as the 'Udwa, the land on the other side of the Straits. I have also sometimes used the anachronistic Tunisia in place of the contemporary but more obscure Ifrīqiya. I have used Common Era (AD) dates. This sometimes leads to imprecisions when one Muslim year includes parts of two CE ones, and where there is uncertainty I have used both, so an event dated in the Arabic sources to 500 will be described as occurring in 1106/7.

Glossary

akhbār: short historical narratives

alcazaba: fortress, usually in a city (from Arabic *al-qasaba*)

baladī: local, a term used to describe those Muslims who settled in al-Andalus before the coming of the Syrians in 741

cortes: assemblies in Christian kingdoms of the Iberian peninsula, including lords, churchmen and representatives of towns

dhimmi: a protected person, a term used for Christians or Jews living under Muslim rule

dinār: Muslim gold coin

dirham: Muslim silver coin

faqīh, pl. *fuqahā'*: a man learned in Muslim law

fatā: lit. young man, hence slave soldier (cf. *ghulām*)

ghāzī: warrior for Islam, one who participates in the *jihād*

ghulām, pl. *ghilmān*: page, hence slave soldier (cf. *fatā*)

haḍra: capital city and surrounding area

hāfiẓ: lit. one who knows the Qur'an by heart, used as an administrative title in the Almohad caliphate

hājib: door keeper or chamberlain, title of chief minister

hashm: army

huerta: fertile irrigated area surrounding cities like Valencia, Murcia

'iqṭā': land or revenues given in payment for military service

jihād: Muslim Holy War (cf. *ghāzī*)

jizya: poll-tax paid by non-Muslims in an Islamic state

jund: lit. army, hence one of the districts in the south of al-Andalus settled by Syrian troops after 741

jundī: soldier recruited from one of the *junds*

kātib, pl. *kuttāb*: secretary

kharāj: land-tax, sometimes used for tax in general

kūra: administrative division of al-Andalus

maghārim: taxes not sanctioned by Muslim law

mawlā, pl. *mawāli*: client or freedman, sometimes used of all non-Arab converts to Islam in the first century AH

muwallad: Muslim from native Iberian stock

qādī: Muslim judge
ra'is, pl. *ru'asā*: chief
Reconquista: Christian reconquest of Muslim Spain and Portugal
rīzq: rations given to soldiers as part of their payment
sāhib al-madīna: administrator of an Andalusi city
ṣā'iqa: summer expedition of Muslims against Christians
sayyid: lord, title given to all members of the ruling Almohad dynasty
shaykh: old man, hence tribal chief or venerable teacher
shurṭa: police force
sijil: document, usually confirmation of office or property
ṣiqlābī, pl. *ṣaqāliba*: Slav, originally used of slave soldiers of eastern European origin who served in the armies of Cordoba, later of all white slave soldiers and mercenaries
sūq: market
tālib: lit. student, used as an administrative title in the Almohad caliphate
thughūr: areas of al-Andalus bordering on Christian territory, frontier zones
'ulamā: men learned in Muslim sciences and law
'ushr, pl. *'ushūr*: tithes paid by Muslims
Vega: fertile plain to the west of Granada
wālī: governor of province
wazīr: honorific title given to senior administrators in Umayyad times, vizier
za'im: leader

Introduction

This book is intended to provide an account of the political history of al-Andalus, the parts of the Iberian peninsula under Muslim rule, between 711, the date of the first Muslim invasion, and 1492 when the last independent Muslim power, the Kingdom of Granada, was destroyed.

By political history I do not simply mean the narratives of rulers and battles, though these are of course important, but also the understanding of the structures which lie behind political events and decisions. The most obvious of these structures were the ruling dynasties, where they came from, who their most powerful supporters were and how they attempted to secure a justification and legitimacy for the exercise of power. The most important function of a pre-modern Islamic state was the raising and paying of the military forces. This determined the composition of the elite, the system of taxation and revenue raising and ultimately the success or failure of the regime. The structure of the military is an essential part of political history. Another concern is the reach and range of government and the extent to which the rulers in Cordoba, Seville or Granada were able to make their authority felt throughout al-Andalus. This in turn leads to the examination of local elites and pressure groups and to the consideration of their origins, nature and power.

This is not a history of the Reconquista. Of course the Christian powers to the north always affected the history of al-Andalus, and from the eleventh century onwards they became a threatening and dominant presence, but the struggle against the Christians was only one, and not always the most important, concern of the rulers of al-Andalus: maintaining their own authority in the Muslim-held areas was usually the first priority, and the affairs of North Africa were often as pressing as those of the Christian frontier. This work attempts to see al-Andalus as a Muslim political society among others like it. Its rulers and administrators were always keenly aware that their land was part of a wider Muslim commonwealth and it was to

this commonwealth, rather than to their northern neighbours, that they looked for contacts and political ideas. The ultimate failure and extinction of al-Andalus should not be allowed to overshadow the whole of its 800-year history.

This book is not an intellectual and cultural history of al-Andalus. This is not because these things are unimportant, or that the Muslims of al-Andalus did not make a major contribution in these fields, but simply because they lie beyond the scope of this study except in so far as they affected, or illustrate, political developments. Similarly, there has recently been much fascinating work on such topics as rural settlement, landscape, irrigation technology and cuisine, but none of these are treated here.

There is a certain unavoidable inconsistency of texture in this work. At some periods we are comparatively well informed about political events and the scope and operations of government. At other periods our sources are much more limited and we can only discern a bare outline. Nor is it true that more recent parts of the history of al-Andalus are better known than the earlier ones: we are well informed, for example, about the reign of al-Hakam II (961–76) because of the survival of al-Rāzi's court chronicle, but the period 1184–1210 is an almost complete blank.

Any broad-brush history of this sort is bound to be heavily dependent on the works of others. For the history of al-Andalus we have two major political histories which are classics and remain the basis for all future research: E. Lévi-Provençal's celebrated *Histoire de l'Espagne Musulmane*, which covers the centuries when Cordoba was the capital (711–1031), and Ambrosio Huici Miranda's much less well known *Historia Política del Imperio Almohade*. To these two can be added J. Bosch Vila, *Los Almoravides*, and Rachel Arie's *L'Espagne Musulmane au temps des Nasrides* (1232–1492).

The last two decades have seen a massive increase in the scope and intensity of research, which has meant that in many ways the history of al-Andalus is better known and understood than the history of any other part of the pre-modern Muslim world, and methodologies for treating some important aspects, prosopography and archaeological evidence for example, are more developed. It is perhaps invidious to single out individuals, but mention should be made of some of the main advances. The period up to 1031 has been the subject of intensive study in Spain and the works of E. Manzano Moreno on political structures, and Pedro Chalmeta and M. Barcelo on administrative and fiscal history, are fundamental. Also of major importance are the five volumes of the *Estudios Onomastico-Biograficos*

de Al-Andalus edited by Manuela Marin and others which have added a whole new dimension to our understanding of the Umayyad regime. The period of the Taifa kings in the eleventh century has recently been superbly covered in *Los Reinos de Taifas: Al-Andalus en el Siglo XI*, edited by M.J. Viguera Molins as vol. viii of the Menendez Pidal, *Historia de España*.

In contrast, the periods of the Almoravids and Almohads have been studied more by French historians. The work of V. Lagardère has greatly increased our understanding of the Almoravid movement itself, while P. Guichard's *Les Musulmans de Valence* is an outstanding work of regional history. The archaeological evidence in its broadest context has been studied in A. Bazzana, P. Cressier and P. Guichard, *Les Châteaux Ruraux d'al-Andalus*. There has been less recent work on the Almohads and Nasrids, but important contributions have been made in R. Arié, *Nasrides*, L.P. Harvey, *Islamic Spain, 1250–1500*, and R. Manzano Rodriguez, *Los Benimerines*.

Numerous other authors, whose works are cited in footnotes and in the bibliography, have increased our understanding of the history of al-Andalus and I am dependent on and grateful to them all. If this work succeeds in providing an overview of the subject and recent research and introducing it to others, be they Orientalists, western mediaevalists or interested general readers, then it will have succeeded in its purpose.

CHAPTER ONE

The Conquest and the Age of the Amirs, 711–56

The Iberian background

The Iberian peninsula, divided into the great provinces of Tarracensis, Carthaginensis, Baetica, Lusitania and Gallaecia, had been one of the richest and most developed areas of the western Roman Empire, but for three centuries before the coming of the Muslims it had been dominated by warrior aristocracies of Germanic origin. The most successful of these were the Visigoths who had first entered the peninsula in the early fifth century. With the accession of King Leovigild in 569 the Visigothic monarchy entered on a century and a half of stability during which kings, based in Toledo, exercised effective power.

The kingdom shared many of the characteristics of the post-Roman kingdoms in France and Italy. In general the Visigothic monarchy was a reasonably strong and effective instrument of government: it did not suffer the internal divisions and progressive debility of the contemporary Merovingian monarchy in France and, right up until the Muslim invasions, the kings maintained their control over most of the Iberian peninsula. In theory the monarchy was elective and successive church councils of Toledo in the mid-seventh century had laid down the rules: the king was to be elected by the bishops and nobles. He was to be a catholic Christian, a Goth by descent and of free birth. He was to be elected either in Toledo or on the site of the previous king's death, and before his accession he had to swear to uphold the laws of the realm. In practice, the choice of monarchs was confined to the most important lineages and there was a natural tendency for fathers to wish to pass their crowns to their sons, as Leovigild did to Recared in 586 and Egica did to Witiza in 702. At the same time, there seems

to have been a strong feeling among the nobility against the establishment of a purely hereditary succession and perhaps that a lineage which had held the crown too long should be replaced.

Under the king, the chief men of the state were the nobles, mostly of Gothic origin, and the bishops, mostly recruited from the Hispano-Roman landowning class, although the distinctions between these two groups must have largely disappeared by the beginning of the eighth century. Besides providing spiritual leadership, the bishops were also among the largest landowners and most powerful political figures in the land. The nobles, who sometimes bore the title of *dux* (duke) or *comes* (count), were also owners of large, often underexploited estates cultivated by semi-free peasants. It was the nobles too who provided the army: apart from a royal guard, there was no standing army and the nobles brought their followers in response to the royal summons and the king might reward them with gifts of gold or silver. In general this simple military system seems to have functioned fairly successfully, but it probably meant that the bulk of the troops owed their first loyalties to their lords, rather than to the monarchy.

It is impossible to make any precise assessment of the population or economy of the peninsula. It has been plausibly suggested¹ that the population had been about six million in the early Roman period but had been reduced by plague and war to four million by the later Visigothic period. Archaeological evidence shows that the large open cities of the earlier period had shrunk into small fortified settlements. Country estates and their buildings were certainly more primitive than the great *latifundia* and villas of the imperial Roman period.

Economic life was almost entirely localised: there is little evidence of long-distance trade and both the small towns and the large estates were effectively economically self-sufficient. The circulation of coinage was extremely limited and most transactions were conducted by barter.

Later Visigothic Spain and Portugal was a fairly stable society and, apart from a limited Byzantine incursion around Cartagena in the south-east, there had been no outside invasion for a couple of centuries. On the other hand, we can picture a very empty landscape, where settlements were few, far between, poor and primitive. Agricultural resources were in many cases neglected or underexploited. There were areas, too, notably in the northern mountains

1. B. Reilly, *The Medieval Spains* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 7.

where the Basques and the Asturians lived, where the people were totally independent of any form of royal control and where a primitive mountain society vigorously resisted outside control. Such was the land the Muslims invaded.

The Muslim conquest, 711–16

The Muslim invasion of Spain and Portugal was in many ways the logical and necessary extension of the conquest of North Africa.² Before the coming of the Muslims the area of the modern states of Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco was occupied by two groups, the Byzantines and the Berbers. The Byzantines held a number of strongholds on the coast, notably Tripoli and Carthage, which they kept supplied by sea. When they reconquered the land from the Vandals in the reign of Justinian, they had established an elaborate system of defences on the southern frontiers of the settled areas, but these seem to have been abandoned by the mid-seventh century when the Muslims began to attack. The remaining Byzantine garrisons defended their coastal strongholds stubbornly and they held out much longer than the garrisons in Syria and Palestine had done a generation before, but they could easily be bypassed by overland invaders and were only a real threat when allied to the Berber tribes of the area.

The Berbers were the real power in the land. They were, and still are, the indigenous inhabitants of North Africa, with their own, unwritten, language, quite distinct from either Latin or Arabic. Their social structure was tribal and they seem to have owed their first loyalties to their kin. Apart from this, there were wide variations of lifestyle. Some Berbers were acculturated to the Byzantine world and many were Christians. Others seem to have lived a much more separate existence and some at least were still pagans. There were Berbers who lived in the cities, many more who lived as farmers in

2. The literature on the Muslim conquest of al-Andalus is vast and fairly uneven in quality. The classic account in E. Lévi-Provençal, *HEM*, i, pp. 1–89, is still a useful starting point. A.D. Taha, *The Muslim Conquest and Settlement of North Africa and Spain* (London and New York, 1989), is a meticulous, detailed but somewhat uncritical account. R. Collins, *The Arab Conquest of Spain, 710–797* (Oxford, 1989), contains important insights into Christian life and literature of the eighth century but is flawed by a contemptuous and uncomprehending attitude to the Arabic sources. A more balanced overview of the period by the doyen of historians of al-Andalus is P. Chalmeta, *Invasión e Islamización: la sumisión de Hispania y la formación de al-Andalus* (Madrid, 1994), and I have relied on this at many points.

mountain villages, some who kept sheep and goats in the steppe lands and yet others who wandered as the Touareg do today in the remote and awesome wastes of the Sahara. Berber genealogies are much less fully recorded than Arabic ones and it is difficult to gauge whether the scattered references we have reflect a static relationship or whether some groups were expanding at the expense of others.

According to Arab sources, the Berber tribes were divided into two groups, called Butr and Barānis, just as Arab tribes were divided into Qays/Mudar and Yemen. Most of the Berbers who joined the Muslim conquest and settled in al-Andalus came from the Butr group. They seem to have retained their tribal identities and probably their pagan religion. In the sixth century these tribes were moving west from Tripolitania and putting pressure on the Byzantine settlements.³ The Barānis, by contrast, were older-established tribes who had entered into closer relations with the Byzantines and had in many cases converted to Christianity. This suggests that the Muslims assumed the leadership and gave extra momentum to an existing movement of populations among the Berbers, and this goes some way to explaining the success and completeness of their conquests. In practice, the difference between Butr and Barānis seems to have had little effect on the politics of al-Andalus, unlike the murderous disputes between Qays/Muḍar and Yemen among the Arabs, and divisions among the Berber tribes were based on smaller units of individual tribes and extended families and their relationship to Arab groups.

The conquest of North Africa⁴ had begun as early as 22/642 when the conqueror of Egypt, 'Amr b. al-Ās, led an expedition to Barqa in Cyrenaica. From there he dispatched an army to Zawīla, an oasis settlement to the south, led by 'Uqba b. Nāfi' al-Fihri. 'Uqba came from a branch of Quraysh, the Prophet Muhammad's tribe, and his father Nāfi' had been one of the first Muslims to settle in Egypt. He came from the elite of early Islamic society and he used his position to make contacts among the Berber people of the area, alliances that were to make his family the most powerful in North Africa and al-Andalus before the coming of the Umayyads in the mid-eighth century. When 'Amr returned to Egypt, he left 'Uqba in charge at Barqa.

The conquest of North Africa was difficult, partly because of

3. On this see E. Manzano Moreno, *La Frontera de Al-Andalus en época de los Omeyas* (Madrid, 1991), pp. 234–5.

4. For the conquest of North Africa see Taha, *Conquest and Settlement*, pp. 55–83, and Chalmeta, *Invasión e Islamización*, pp. 72–94.

political disputes among the Muslims but more because of the vigorous resistance put up both by the Berber tribes of the interior and the garrisons of Byzantine cities like Tripoli and Carthage on the coast. More than the other Arab commanders, 'Uqba seems to have understood that the key to subduing North Africa was to enrol the support of Berber tribes. In 50/670 he founded the Muslim settlement of Qayrawān, away from the coast, in the central plain of Tunisia. Like earlier Arab garrison cities at Kūfa, Baṣra and Fuṣṭāt, this was designed to be a settlement where the Muslims could preserve their identity and from which they could dominate the surrounding country.

In 681 'Uqba led a spectacular raid to the west in which he reached Tangier and the Atlantic coast, although there were no Muslim settlements beyond modern Tunisia at this stage. This was his last and greatest achievement, but his memory lingered on and his sons continued to play a very important role in the Muslim politics of North Africa. There followed a period when the Arabs were almost driven out and Qayrawān itself fell to the Berber leader Kusayla. The Muslims did not recover the initiative until 74/694 when the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik sent an army of Syrians led by Ḥassān b. al-Nu'mān al-Ghassānī. He captured the last Byzantine outpost at Carthage and defeated the Berber leader, the priestess Kāhina, and in 82/701 established himself firmly in Qayrawān. He was able to do this, not only because of his Syrian troops, but because of his policy of working with the Berbers. Some tribes, like the Luwāta, seem to have remained allies of the Arabs throughout; many others came over after the defeat of Kāhina, including her own sons. They converted to Islam and were enrolled in the Muslim *diwān*, receiving a share of the spoils like the Arabs.

Ḥassān was dismissed by the governor of Egypt, who supervised the western provinces in 704, probably because he was too successful, and was replaced by Mūsā b. Nuṣayr, a man of obscure origins who had risen in the financial administration of the Umayyad empire. He continued Ḥassān's policy of recruiting converted Berbers into the Muslim armies and using this new force to extend his control further to the west until, in about 90/708, he took Tangier and appointed a Berber supporter of his, Tāriq b. Ziyād, as governor.

The conquest of North Africa had been achieved by an alliance of Arabs and Berbers in the name of Islam. As the conquest proceeded, so the importance of the Berber contribution increased. By the time the Muslims were conquering the area of modern

Morocco, it is probable that the great majority of the troops in their army were Berbers, newly converted to Islam. These Berber troops received a share of the booty but, apart from Ṭāriq b. Ziyād in Tangier, they do not seem to have occupied positions of political importance. Many Berbers entered into *wālā'* agreements with important Arab groups or individuals. They were then described as *mawlā* (pl. *mawālī*) of so and so (Ṭāriq b. Ziyād, the Berber governor of Tangier and probably a man of considerable importance in his own community, for example, is described as *mawlā* of Mūsā b. Nuṣayr, the Arab governor of Qayrawān). This relationship can be described as a sort of clientage, by which members of the conquered peoples were converted (you could not be a non-Muslim *mawlā*) and given a position in the Muslim community in exchange for their loyalty and support.⁵ These networks were very important in the fluid politics of early Muslim North Africa and al-Andalus and were often more useful than tribal followings in building up a power base: both the family of 'Uqba b. Nāfi' and the Umayyads depended heavily on their *mawālī* to support their political ambitions.

The governors (*wālī* or *'āmil* are the two Arabic terms used to describe this office), by contrast, were dependent for their authority on the governor of Egypt, and a change of command in Fustāṭ (Old Cairo) almost certainly meant a change in Qayrawān. This pattern became even more pronounced in al-Andalus, where the position of the governor was constantly threatened by changes of policies or personnel in Qayrawān or Fustat. In these circumstances, it was difficult for a commanding personality to establish himself for long and the governors were often transient figures who made little impact on the country.

The conquerors fed off further conquests. It is true that subject Christian and pagan Berbers are said to have been obliged to pay *jizya* or poll-tax, but there is little indication of any formal tax-gathering machinery. Most of the soldiers must have served in the hope of booty and new lands rather than for a salary and Muslim dominion in North Africa had to expand to survive. If the booty dried up and no new opportunities appeared, then the groups and tribes would turn in on each other and disintegration would inevitably follow. The conquest of Tangier effectively meant the end of westward expansion; now only Spain could offer the sort of opportunities the state needed to be able to survive.

Our understanding of the Muslim conquest of al-Andalus and

5. For the role of *mawālī* in the Umayyad caliphate, see P. Crone, *Slaves on Horses. The Evolution of Islamic Polity* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 49–57.

the establishment of Arab rule is hampered by the nature of the sources. No contemporary Arabic accounts of the conquest survive and the earliest major sources which have been passed down to us are collections of historical anecdotes (*akhbār*) preserved in a number of works dating from the tenth century onwards, notably the anonymous *Akhbār al-Majmū'a* (*Collection of Anecdotes*) from possibly c. 940⁶ and the *Ta'rīkh Iftitāh al-Andalus* (*History of the Conquest of al-Andalus*) of Ibn al-Qūtiya (d. 977).⁷ Both these collections arrange their materials more or less in chronological order but they are not annals and are more concerned with vivid and interesting stories than the careful ordering of events. The *Akhbār* is particularly important for the pre-Umayyad period, while Ibn al-Qūtiya gives vivid and gossipy accounts of the courts of the Umayyad amirs.

In the tenth century these accounts were edited and systematised using the criteria of annalistic historiography developed in the eastern Islamic world by such authorities as al-Madā'inī (d. 839) and al-Tabarī (d. 923). In al-Andalus this editing seems to have been the work of the Rāzī family, originally from Rayy in central Iran, who had come to al-Andalus as merchants in the late ninth century. According to his son 'Isā (d. 989), it was Ahmad b. Mūsā al-Rāzī (d. 955) who took the *akhbār* which people in al-Andalus had not previously been very interested in and ordered them (*dawrwanā*) according to the rules of historical science.⁸ The writings of the Rāzīs, father and son, have largely been lost but they were used, and often incorporated entirely, with acknowledgements, by the great eleventh-century compiler Ibn Ḥayyān (d. 1076). Much of Ibn Ḥayyān's work has in turn been lost, including the sections which dealt with the conquests and the early amirs. Some of his material has, however, been preserved in shorter works, like the anonymous *Fath al-Andalus* of c. 1100,⁹ and later abbreviated recensions in annalistic compilations like Ibn Idhārī's *Bayān al-Maghrib*¹⁰ of about 1300.

The fact that the sources as they have reached us were written down at least two centuries after the events has meant that fierce

6. Ed. with Spanish trans., E. Lafuente y Alcantara (Madrid, 1867). I have used the dating suggested by Chalmeta (*Invasión e Islamización*, p. 50) because of the archaic nature of the text, but other authorities prefer an eleventh-century date. The text is analysed in detail in C. Sanchez-Albornoz, *El 'Ajbar Maymū'a. Cuestiones historiográficas que suscita* (Buenos Aires, 1944).

7. Ed. with Spanish trans., J. Ribera (Madrid, 1926).

8. Quoted in Chalmeta, *Invasión e Islamización*, p. 45.

9. Ed. L. Molina (Madrid, 1994).

10. The history of the conquest and the Amirs is covered in vol. ii, ed. G.S. Colin and E. Lévi-Provençal (Leiden, 1948).

controversy has raged about the relative merits and reliability of these sources. Opinions have varied between historians like Taha, on the one hand, who accept the Arabic narratives almost completely,¹¹ and Collins, who holds that the Arabic tradition is virtually worthless.¹²

It is important to attempt to assess the reliability of this material. Clearly these Arab histories are biased in the sense that they are in favour of Muslim victories and claimed that these were the result of God's support, but this sort of open partisanship does not present real problems to the modern historian. There are, however, a variety of other ways in which the material needs to be treated with caution.

There is material which is clearly legendary or folkloric, like the story of the locked chamber in Toledo which King Roderick was rash enough to open, only to find that the interior was covered by paintings of Arab warriors, and, probably, the story of Count Julian and the rape of his daughter by King Roderick. These stories, with their obvious predictive and entertaining functions, are unlikely to mislead historians. The use of *topoi* and conventional phrases, expressions and characterisation borrowed from eastern Islamic sources may also give a false impression of detailed accuracy.¹³

There may also have been more hard-headed reasons for being economical with the truth. The nature of the conquest affected the status of the lands conquered: if they were conquered by force ('*anwatan*') they became the property of the conquerors, the indivisible *fay'* (immovable booty) of the Muslims, and the proceeds from these properties were to be used for the benefit of the Muslims as their ruler saw fit. If the lands were taken peacefully (*sulhan*), on the other hand, they continued to be the absolute property of the inhabitants and would only pass into Muslim hands by inheritance, purchase or conversion of the owner, in which case they would be the absolute property of their Muslim owners. There is some evidence of two historiographical traditions within the accounts of the conquests.¹⁴ The first, reported by the *Rāzis* and

11. See *Conquest and Settlement*, pp. 4–14. 12. *Arab Conquest*, pp. 34–5.

13. For these problems in early Islamic historiography in general, see A. Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition* (new edn with L.I. Conrad, Princeton, 1994); for a detailed discussion of similar problems in the historiography of al-Andalus, see B. Munzel, *Feinde, Nachbarn, Bündnispartner* (Münster, 1994).

14. For these ideas see Manzano Moreno, 'Arabes, berberes e indígenas: al-Andalus en su primer periodo de formación', paper presented at the Congress on *Incastellamento*, French School in Rome, 1994, pp. 3–12. In press.

other sources close to the Umayyad court, emphasises the forceful nature of the conquest, since conquest by force would give the Umayyads the right to dispose of the lands, whereas other accounts talk of take-over by agreement and so emphasise the rights of the owners. This may account for disagreements in the sources about the nature of the conquest, and such details as the fall of Seville, which is said to have surrendered peacefully and then rebelled and had to be subdued by force, may be explained as attempts to conflate two contradictory traditions. In the end, however, it must be admitted that these divisions of opinion could simply be the result of genuine confusion over events which happened long ago.

The fact that these sources, in the form in which they have been handed down to us, are much later need not undermine their credibility. The Arabic historical tradition laid great emphasis on preserving the wording and forms of old accounts and much of the work of compilers like Ibn Hayyān was basically editing and republishing older materials, rather than composing a new account. Later chronicles can contain important nuggets of information which survive from much earlier times: the most important account of the nature of the settlement of the Syrian *junds* in al-Andalus after 741, for example, is found in fragments of al-Rāzī embedded in the late fourteenth-century *Iḥāṭa* of Ibn al-Khaṭīb, composed in its present form 650 years after the events it describes.¹⁵

In addition to the Arabic texts there are also Latin sources. Of these by far the most important is the so-called *Chronicle* of 754, also known as the *Mozarabic Chronicle*. This was composed in al-Andalus, probably in the mid-eighth century. Not surprisingly, its viewpoint is very different from the one presented by the Muslim chronicles, and for the Christian author, the invasion is a major disaster rather than a God-given triumph. There are differences over details, but there is a considerable measure of agreement about the broad outlines of events. Given its very early date, the evidence of the *Chronicle* of 754 must carry great weight and it is helpful that it tends to corroborate rather than undermine the outlines of the Muslim tradition.¹⁶

The sources for the Muslim conquest and establishment are as patchy as they are for most other areas of western Europe in the early eighth century. Accidents of survival may play a large part in shaping our understanding. There is always a danger in over-interpreting fragments of information and giving them more

15. See below, p. 50. 16. See Collins, *Arab Conquest*, pp. 26–34.

importance than they deserve. Despite all these qualifications, however, we can attempt a plausible reconstruction of events.

Most of the early Arabic accounts of the beginning of the conquest of al-Andalus tell of a Count Julian of Ceuta, perhaps a Byzantine official with close contacts with the Visigothic rulers of Spain across the Straits.¹⁷ He had sent his daughter, as was the custom among the Visigothic nobility, to the royal court to complete her education. Here she was assaulted by King Roderick and complained to her father, upon which the outraged governor turned to the local Muslim commander as an ally in revenge. Whatever the literal truth of this story, it probably reflects a situation in which the Visigothic King Roderick was resented by an important section of society who were prepared to call in help from outside.

During the seventh century, the Visigothic monarchy was both elective and hereditary. In 693 Egica had associated his son Witiza in his rule, and when he died in 702 Witiza succeeded him as king. In his turn, he attempted to do the same for his own son Akhila and gave him the governorate of Narbonne, but when he died in 710 there was a *coup d'état* in Toledo, probably engineered by nobles who had no wish to see one family retaining the crown for too long. Power was seized by Roderick, not apparently a member of the ruling family, who was able to defeat the army of Akhila and his brothers Alamundo and Ardabast. In terms of Visigothic practice, Roderick was probably a legitimate king by election, but the circumstances did mean that there were a number of influential people at the court who felt themselves wronged; they might well have caused scandalous stories about the new king to circulate and would not have been sad to see him humiliated by outside invaders.

Like some other Muslim conquests, 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ's expedition to Egypt, for example, the invasion of Spain seems to have been undertaken on local initiative without the approval of the hierarchy, represented in this case by the governor of Ifrīqiya at Qayrawān, Mūsā b. Nuṣayr, and ultimately by the Caliph al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik in Damascus. Majority opinion holds that Tāriq b. Ziyād, governor of Tangier, with a force of perhaps 7,000 to 12,000 men, mostly Berbers, crossed the Straits of Gibraltar in April 711 and established themselves first on the rock which still bears Tāriq's name, Gibraltar, before moving on to occupy Algeciras and the

17. For recent assessments of the Julian story, see Taha, *Conquest and Settlement*, pp. 84–8, and the full discussion in Chalmeta, *Invasion e Islamizacion*, pp. 112–20. Munzel, *Feinde, Nachbarn, Bundnispartner*, pp. 37–54, has a detailed discussion of the early sources.

surrounding countryside. Opinions differ as to whether they encountered any immediate resistance but are agreed that Roderick and the bulk of the Visigothic army were campaigning in the north of the country and it was not until the summer that he was able to lead his army south to counter the invasion.

There followed a battle which was to determine the future of the Iberian peninsula for the next eight centuries. It seems to have lasted for a number of days around 20 July 711. The exact site of the battle has been the subject of prolonged debate, but it probably lay to the south-east of Medina Sidonia. The sources give very large numbers for Roderick's army, between 40,000 and 100,000, and while these are certainly exaggerated, it is likely that Roderick's army was significantly larger than Tāriq's and may have amounted to between 24,000 and 30,000 men.¹⁸ Arab sources suggest that there were divisions in the Visigothic ranks and that the brothers of Witiza at least hoped that the Muslims would defeat Roderick and then depart, leaving them to assume the crown they felt was rightly theirs. Whatever the reasons, the Visigothic army suffered a shattering defeat, Roderick was missing, presumed dead, and members of the army scattered throughout Iberia, spreading defeatist sentiment.¹⁹

If the brothers of Witiza had imagined that the Muslims would abandon the fruits of their victory, they were soon undeceived. In the aftermath of his victory, Tāriq moved with speed and confidence, aided by Count Julian. He dispatched a force under Mughīth al-Rūmī to Cordoba. Here Mughith encountered serious resistance from the governor and a small garrison who defended themselves in a church after the Muslims had entered the city through a hole in the walls: it was three months before they surrendered and were executed. Malaga and the district of Elvira (the area around the later city of Granada, which did not really become important until the eleventh century) seem to have been taken by small units without much trouble, but Tāriq himself moved on quickly to the Visigothic capital at Toledo. There was no resistance. Most of the people, apart from the Jews, had abandoned the city and Tāriq was able to spend the winter of 711–12 there.

Tāriq's spectacular success attracted the attention of his superior, Mūsā b. Nuṣayr, in Qayrawān and he was understandably eager to associate himself and his supporters with the triumph and the booty which went with it. The next year he set out with a large

18. Chalmeta, *Invasion e Islamizacion*, p. 134.

19. For differing opinions on the site and course of the battle, see Taha, *Conquest and Settlement*, pp. 88–90; Chalmeta, *Invasion e Islamizacion*, pp. 132–44.

force, 18,000 men we are told,²⁰ which included many Arabs.²¹ He landed at Algeciras and adopted a strategy which would enable him and his men to make conquests of their own. He went first to the great fortress of Carmona, which had been bypassed by Tāriq, which was captured with the help of some of Count Julian's men who pretended to be fugitives and so gained access to the city. He then went on to take Seville, which is said to have resisted for some months before being taken by force. We are given no more details about this siege and it may be that the resistance was 'invented' so that the city could be said to have been taken by storm and its lands confiscated. Mūsā subdued the neighbouring towns and went on north to Merida, where the Arab chroniclers comment on the splendour of the Roman remains. Here there was serious resistance, the garrison made a sortie and siege engines were required to force it into submission in July 713. While this was going on, Mūsā sent his son 'Abd al-'Azīz to the east; when he came to Orihuela, then the most important city in the Murcia (the city of Murcia itself was another later foundation) district, he was met by the local commander or *dux*, Theodemir, with whom he made a treaty whose lenient terms meant effective local autonomy and freedom of Christian worship in exchange for goodwill and a modest tribute to be paid in cash, wheat, barley, thickened grape juice, vinegar, honey and oil.²² As a result of this, the Murcia area was known to the Arabs as Tudmīr for centuries afterwards.

After the fall of Merida, Mūsā headed for Toledo whence Tāriq came to meet him. Inevitably, when the two forces did join at Talavera there were tensions and reproaches, but they patched up their relationship and wintered together in Toledo. In the spring of 714 campaigning began again with expeditions which led to the nominal subjection of Galicia and the Ebro valley.

Their triumphant career was brought to a halt by a summons to present themselves before the Caliph in Damascus. Reluctantly, the two leaders left Spain in September 714, never to return, Mūsā leaving his son 'Abd al-'Azīz as governor.

While most of the peninsula had now been visited by Muslim armies, the conquest was by no means complete. The establishment

20. *Akhbār al-Majmū'a*, p. 15; other sources say 10,000: see Taha, *Conquest and Settlement*, p. 94.

21. For Mūsā's invasion and the conquests that followed, see Taha, *Conquest and Settlement*, pp. 94–102, and Chalmeta, *Invasion e Islamización*, pp. 168–205.

22. The full text and translation can be found in C. Melville and A. Ubaydli, *Christians and Moors in Spain. vol iii Arabic Sources* (Warminster, 1992), pp. 10–13.

of Muslim power seems to have occurred in two stages. The first was the take-over of the main cities and the fertile lands of the south and the Levante, in some cases with the assistance or at least agreement of members of the Visigothic nobility like the sons of Witiza and Theodemir. The second phase involved the conquest of the north-east, where there is some evidence that Visigothic rule continued under Akhila until the governorate of al-Samh (718–21) and the making of peace agreements with the Visigothic lords of the Ebro valley area and other remote districts like the mountains north of Malaga. In this way the conquest of al-Andalus resembled, on a smaller scale, the Muslim conquest of Iran where the main cities and lines of communication were first secured and only later were agreements reached with the inhabitants of outlying areas.

The reasons for the success of the Muslim conquest have been much debated. From the Muslim side the explanation was simple: God had willed it. For Christian commentators from the author of the ninth-century *Chronicle* of Alfonso III onwards, things were much more problematic and they were faced with the question: how could God have allowed this disaster to afflict a Christian people? For mediaeval authors the most plausible explanation was that the Visigoths were immoral and had disobeyed God's commandments, while more secular modern historians have tended to look for signs of political decay and weakness in the Visigothic kingdom.

For the author of the *Chronicle* of 754 the blame lay with the ambitions of Roderick, the treachery of Oppa, son of King Egica, who conspired with the Arabs, and the cowardice of the Archbishop of Toledo, Sindered, who fled to Rome rather than remaining with his flock.²³ For the *Chronicle* of Alfonso III it was the immorality of King Witiza, who besides having many wives and concubines himself, ordered his bishops and deacons to marry, and the treachery of his sons that led to the Christian débâcle.²⁴

In fact, the evidence for the decadence of the Visigothic kingdom is non-existent.²⁵ In many ways it seems to have been stronger in its final years than ever before: the damaging religious division between Arian Visigoths and their Orthodox subjects had been laid to rest for more than a century and there is by the end of the seventh century no real sign of a split between Roman and Visigothic elements. The Jews certainly suffered severe legal disabilities and intermittent persecution and it is clear that they preferred to remain

23. Caps. 52–4. 24. Caps. 5–7.

25. For a good discussion of the arguments, see Collins, *Arab Conquest*, pp. 6–22.

in their cities and accept Muslim rule than to join their Christian fellow countrymen in flight, but there is no reliable evidence that they actively supported or encouraged the invaders. It is also true that the Basques remained outside effective Visigothic control, and indeed Roderick was campaigning in that area at the time of the first Muslim invasion, but separatism in the northern mountains had been a feature of political life for centuries and it was no more dangerous or more threatening than before. In fact, in some ways the very strength of the kingdom made it easier to conquer: if it had been divided into numerous local lordships and principalities, they would no doubt have put up stiff resistance. As it was, Visigothic Spain, like Anglo-Saxon England in 1066, was centralised to the extent that the defeat of the royal army left the entire land open to the invaders.

The Visigothic monarchy suffered a short-term political crisis at the accession of Roderick, resulting in the defection of important elements of the ruling class which may in turn have contributed to a major military defeat which left the country defenceless. The army he led against the invaders was certainly large enough for the purpose; its military worth is less easy to assess. Clearly the battle was lost, but this might have been the result of bad luck or bad decision-making on the day rather than long-term military weakness.

It is striking that there seems to have been little attempt to defend the cities effectively or to raise a second army. Apart from resistance in the northern mountains, which was at the beginning not conducted by the Visigoths, only Cordoba and Merida put up any effective defence. The smallness of the numbers is noticeable: Tāriq is said to have sent Mughīth against Cordoba with only 300 men, which might not have been effective if the governor had been able to raise more than 400 to defend it. The city seems to have been decrepit: the Roman bridge was broken and there was a major hole in the ramparts. When the Muslims arrived at Orihuela the governor Theodemir had so few men that he had to dress up women as soldiers and put them on the ramparts. No-one seems to have defended Toledo, a superb natural fortress. Perhaps this failure was partly a result of lack of population, or at least of arms-bearing population. When Saladin invaded the Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1187, the Crusaders mustered a large army to oppose him but to do so they had to empty their cities and fortifications of men. When they lost the battle of Hattin, their splendid castles were left virtually undefended and most of them soon fell to the invaders. This

may well have been the same in the case of Visigothic Spain. It was not perhaps that numbers of the population in general were lacking, but rather that numbers of military men were inadequate. There seems to have been a sharp division in Visigothic society between military and non-military classes and there is no mention of popular or civilian resistance. In Cordoba the Muslims were informed by a shepherd they met that most of the people had fled and that only the garrison of 400 and the *du'afā* remained. *Du'afā* is an Arabic word which refers to the non-arms-bearing part of the population; it was clearly considered out of the question that such people would participate in the defence of the city.

Another factor in the lack of resistance may have been that the Visigoths did not take the invasion sufficiently seriously. It has already been noted that Roderick's opponents among the aristocracy were hoping that the invaders would defeat him and depart, leaving them in charge, and it is interesting to see that this attitude was shared by at least some of the invaders. It seems that Tāriq had to persuade Mūsā to allow the Muslims to settle in Spain and as late as 717 the Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz appointed a governor whose mission it was to evacuate the Muslims from the Iberian peninsula. It must have seemed to many in Spain that the logical response to the Muslim raiders was to retreat to their mountain fastnesses with what they could carry and wait for them to take their booty and go.

On the whole the Muslims offered generous terms which certainly made surrender a more attractive option, whereas unsuccessful resistance could, as the unfortunate defenders of Cordoba found, lead to death. In Andalucia the sons of Witiza seem to have been allowed to retain possession of the royal lands;²⁶ in the Murcia area the terms amounted to local autonomy; in Merida the inhabitants were allowed to keep their possessions but the property of those who had been killed in the battle for the city, those who had fled north and of the churches, was confiscated. In the later phases of the conquest many Visigothic lords in the Ebro valley area were allowed to retain their lands and status and soon converted to Islam: amongst the best known of these were the Banū Qasi (Casius) of Tudela and the Banū 'Amrūs of Huesca, who formed dynasties which dominated the area for two centuries after the Muslim conquest.²⁷ Except for the action against church lands, this fits in well with what we know of Muslim terms elsewhere; the local people

26. Manzano 'Arabes, berberes e indigenas', p. 13. 27. Ibid., pp. 18–19.

were allowed to remain in possession of their lands as long as they paid a land tax and a poll-tax to the conquerors.

The settlement of the Muslims

In the event Spain proved too attractive to its conquerors and they did not leave but chose to settle in the new lands. In the eastern Islamic world it had been the intention that the Muslims should settle only in certain garrison towns, like Kūfa and Baṣra in Iraq, Fustāṭ (Old Cairo) in Egypt and Qayrawān in Ifrīqiya, and that they should live off the taxes of the land. No effort seems to have been made to develop such a system in Spain, and Muslim settlement seems to have been haphazard and determined by the interests of the settlers rather than any overall scheme. The conquerors settled down as property owners and do not seem to have received the '*atā'*, or pensions, which were such an important feature of early Muslim society in the Middle East. This in turn meant that there was no need for the elaborate and precocious bureaucracy which had grown up to service the system, nor any need to compile *dīwāns* or lists of those entitled to pensions. The slow development of bureaucracy in al-Andalus may in turn have been a reason for the slow development of a literary culture: not until the time of 'Abd al-Rahmān II (822–52) did administration and a native literary culture begin to appear.

Cordoba became the capital shortly after the initial conquest and remained crucial to the politics of the period. Control of the capital was vital for anyone who sought to govern the country and no serious attempt was made to shift the capital elsewhere. The reasons for this are not clear at first. It was not the Roman or Byzantine capital and had little obvious strategic importance. It was, however, at the hinge of a number of important routes. To the north the roads ran through the passes of the Sierra Morena to Calatrava, Toledo and eventually to the Ebro valley. To the east the upper Guadalquivir valley gave access to the Levante, while south and west Elvira (Granada) and Seville were easily accessible. The geography of al-Andalus always made communications a problem, but Cordoba was probably the least inconvenient site for the centre of government.

Perhaps more important was the rich agricultural hinterland of the city and the fact that this was densely settled by the Muslims. These resources of supplies and men were often able to sustain the rulers when, in the reign of the Amir 'Abd Allāh (888–912) for

example, other areas slipped out of their control. Toledo, another possible capital and the centre of Visigothic power, was clearly lacking in such local resources.

The non-Muslim population probably paid some taxes to Cordoba, probably a *jizya* or poll-tax and perhaps a land tax as well; a late source based on much earlier narratives recounts how a Christian count, Ardashast, son of the old king Witiza, rather than a Muslim bureaucrat was in charge of collecting the tax from the Christians.²⁸

Naturally, people from the same tribal and ethnic backgrounds tended to settle in the same areas and in areas they considered appropriate for their lifestyle. On the whole the Arabs settled in the main cities and the fertile irrigated areas of the Guadalquivir valley, the Levante around Murcia and Zaragoza and the middle Ebro valley. In some places there were concentrations of men from the same tribes in the same area, Lakhm around Malaga for example, and the *Judhāmīs* and *Tujibīs* who settled in Zaragoza were to dominate the political life of the city and the surrounding area for centuries to come. Other tribes were more dispersed.

It would be wrong to think of these Arabs as Bedouin. Apart from the Qurashis, almost all of them belonged to the Yemeni group of Arab tribes. Some of these, like Lakhm and *Judhāmī*, had lived in the steppe lands of Jordan and southern Palestine, while others, like *Khawlān* and *Ma'afir*, came from Yemen proper, a land of cities, well-built villages and carefully tended farms. In either case they would have been familiar with urban and agricultural life. Many of them were second or third generation immigrants to North Africa, reared in such urban settlements as *Fuṣṭāt* and *Qayrawān* and well placed to take advantage of the opportunities offered by their newly conquered lands. Tribal loyalties do not seem to have been strong. The settlers acquired land in absolute ownership, sometimes it would seem by inheritance, marrying the daughters of the previous Visigothic owners, as 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Mūsā married Roderick's daughter and Sara, granddaughter of Witiza, married two Arab husbands in succession and founded a dynasty which produced, among others, the tenth-century historian Ibn al-Qutiyā.²⁹ The integration of important elements of the Visigothic aristocracy into the new Muslim ruling class certainly accounts for some of the lack of opposition.

28. See the important passage in Ibn al-Khatīb, *Al-Iḥāqā fi akhbār Gharnāṭa*, ed. M. 'Inān (4 vols, Cairo, 1973–77), i, pp. 100–5.

29. Manzano 'Arabes, berberes e indígenas', p. 15.

The Berbers were widely distributed throughout al-Andalus. Many settled in the central Meseta, Extremadura and the whole of the north and west apart from Zaragoza and its environs. Certain important cities like Toledo and Merida lay in areas with a predominantly Berber population. There was also a significant Berber presence in the Valencia area, where they probably practised transhumance, wintering flocks on the coastal plains and moving west into the mountains for the summer, and the Guadalquivir valley. These lands were in some ways less rich and inviting than the areas settled by the Arabs and it has been suggested that the Berbers were obliged to accept inferior lands despite the major contribution they had made to the conquests. However, there are reasons for thinking that this may not have been the case. As we have seen, there was no overall direction or system in the allocation of lands and, given the small numbers of the conquerors and the vast extent of the conquered lands, they would certainly have been able to take over richer areas had they wished to. Some Berbers were certainly farmers, used to irrigated agriculture, but the majority seem to have been pastoral people and it was natural that they should gravitate to the familiar pastoral environments of the Iberian peninsula. It is quite possible that many Berbers brought flocks with them with the result that they had no alternative but to look for pasture. This did not mean that there were not conflicts between Arabs and Berbers which eventually erupted in civil war, but there is no evidence that grievances over land were among the causes of this.

The early governors, 714–41

The years between the departure of Mūsā b. Nuṣayr in 714 and the installation of Balj b. Bishr al-Qushayrī as governor in 741 were the period when these early settlers enjoyed unopposed power. At first glance it is a period of great confusion: governors succeeded each other with bewildering speed and only one ('Anbasa b. Suhaym al-Kalbī, 721–26) lasted for more than a year or two. Beneath this confusion, however, there are several common themes. The settlers wanted to control the riches of al-Andalus for themselves, and to increase that wealth by raiding areas in France, which were still in the Dār al-Harb (the House of War, that is, non-Muslim territory) and from which booty could be obtained. It did not especially matter to them whether the governors who ruled the country were chosen by them, as sometimes happened, particularly when the previous governor had died a violent death, or appointed from outside,

as long as they were responsive to their needs. In contrast to the period which followed 741, this first quarter of a century was comparatively free of internal strife and rebellion.

When Mūsā b. Nuṣayr departed, he left his son 'Abd al-'Azīz in charge. He established himself as governor in Seville and married Roderick's widow. The story in the Arabic sources explains that she persuaded him to wear a crown and adopt other royal pretensions, as the Visigothic kings had, and that the Arab notables saw this as un-Islamic and assassinated him. This certainly reflects their fears that he was attempting to make the governorship his family's property. They may also have been concerned that he was encouraging new settlers from North Africa and the Middle East who would demand a share of the wealth of the country. The struggle of the early arrivals to maintain their privileged status in the face of challenges from later immigrants was to be a major source of unrest in the period of the governors.³⁰ After 'Abd al-'Azīz no governor died a violent death before 741 except at the hands of the infidel, and there were no rebellions of importance.

Muslim Spain was only loosely attached to the main body of the caliphate, but, given the vast distances involved, it is impressive to see how much influence the Umayyad caliphs in Damascus could exert on this, the newest and most distant of their provinces. Governors were in general appointed by the governor of Ifrīqiya in Qayrawān or sometimes, as in the case of al-Samḥ b. Mālik al-Khawlānī, by the Caliph in person, and they were almost always outsiders to the province with no local power base or following. This did not always mean that the wishes of the local people were ignored and the *Akhbār al-Majmū'a* states, perhaps with exaggerated local patriotism, that if they did not like a governor or if he attempted to undermine their autonomy and privileged fiscal status, they would write to the Caliph who would send one who pleased them.³¹ Sometimes, if the governor was killed, the settlers would 'elect' a successor, but such elections were not usually accepted by Qayrawān; when al-Samḥ b. Mālik was killed in the attack on Toulouse, they chose 'Abd al-Rahmān b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ghāfiqī, but the governor of Qayrawān sent 'Anbasa b. Suhaym. When 'Anbasa was himself killed while raiding in France in 726 the local people again 'elected' and again their nomination was rejected, but in 730

30. The assassination of Abd al-'Aziz is discussed in Chalmeta, *Invasion e Islamizacion*, pp. 245–54. Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam's account of the event is translated in Melville and Ubaydli, *Christians and Moors*, pp. 14–17.

31. *Akhbār al-Majmū'a*, p. 25.

an unpopular outsider was replaced by 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Ghāfiqī as a sop to local opinion.

The Caliph in Damascus was remembered in the Friday prayers and his name appeared on the coins. Whether he received any more tangible benefits is not clear. In Muslim law a fifth of the wealth seized at the time of conquest belonged to the Caliph as a fifth had originally been reserved for the Prophet Muḥammad, but it is unlikely that the Caliph ever received any revenue from this fifth. Any attempts to secure a share of the revenues of al-Andalus for the Umayyad government were vigorously resisted by the early settlers.

In 718 the reforming Caliph 'Umar II (717–20) appointed al-Samḥ b. Mālik al-Khawlānī as governor to implement the fiscal reforms he had been introducing throughout the caliphate.³² The governor arrived with a body of followers said to have been equal in number to the original conquerors. His first task, apparently, was to send to the Caliph 'a detailed description of al-Andalus, its rivers and its seas' – a sort of Doomsday Book. Then, in order to provide for his newly arrived followers, he intended to separate the land that had been taken by force (*'anwatan'*) from the land that had been taken as a result of a treaty (*sulḥan*) and to take a fifth of the *'anwatan'* as the government's share and distribute the remaining four-fifths among the new arrivals. Predictably, this aroused the indignation of the 'People of the Conquest' and they sent a deputation to the Caliph who responded by confirming the villages in the hands of those who had taken them as booty.³³ They would be liable to pay the *'ushr* or tithe on this land. The newcomers were accommodated by dividing the caliphal fifth among them in territorial concessions (*iqtā'at*). For the first time the land was assessed for taxation, with the intention that the surplus should be sent to Damascus, as happened in other provinces of the caliphate. In the case of al-Andalus, al-Samḥ was allowed to use such revenue as remained after the payment of salaries and the expenses of the Holy War for the rebuilding of the bridge and city wall in Cordoba. In short, there is no unequivocal evidence that the caliphs received anything beyond gifts at the time of conquest from al-Andalus or that any financial strings bound the province to the central government. After the death of the Caliph in 720 and al-Samḥ in 721, these centralising measures seem to have been allowed to lapse.

32. I have followed the discussion of al-Samḥ's governorate in Chalmeta, *Invasión e Islamización*, pp. 259–68; see also Manzano, 'Arabes, berberes e indígenas', p. 21.

33. *Akhbār al-Majmū'a*, pp. 23–4.

The governors also issued coins from the earliest times in order to facilitate the distribution of booty and then the payment of taxes. The first of these date from immediately after the first conquests, 711–12.³⁴ Though they bear Latin inscriptions, such as the Islamic monotheist formula ‘in nomine domini non nisi deus solus non deus similis’, they are based not on Visigothic coins but on those issued by the Muslims in North Africa and ultimately on Byzantine originals. Under the governorate of al-Hurr (716–18) coins with bilingual Latin/Arabic inscriptions were minted, and in 720 al-Samh, as part of his fiscal reforms, minted the first purely Arab coins, with the sort of clear and elegant inscriptions which characterised Umayyad coinage throughout the caliphate. This suggests a development of financial administration, although it is not until the reign of ‘Abd al-Rahmān II (822–52) that we hear of an organised mint in Cordoba. Gold coins were struck in small numbers in the early years, but the use of gold was abandoned after 744–45 and thereafter silver *dirhams* were the standard issues.

This political establishment was typical of many areas of the early Islamic state, the conquerors and their descendants firmly in control, using the revenues of the province as they saw fit, obliging governors to work with them or be forced out and bitterly hostile to any attempts to undermine their position, either by central government or by any other group attempting to grab a share for themselves.

Attacks on France and the few remaining areas of resistance in the north of the Iberian peninsula were the major events. Many members of the Visigothic aristocracy had made their peace with the Muslims, but a few had fled northwards, among them Pelayo.³⁵ In the north these exiles joined forces with the local people, always resistant to any central government. Together they opposed the Muslims in the difficult and inaccessible mountain areas of the northern flanks of the Picos de Europa. Here they seem to have elected Pelayo as king and been victorious in a small encounter known to history as the battle of Covadonga and traditionally dated to 717. The reports of the Arab historians do not mention this trifling setback, but for later Christian sources the battle of Covadonga marks

34. The standard work on the early coinage of al-Andalus is A. Balaguer, *Las Emisiones transicionales Arabe-musulmanas de Hispania* (Barcelona, 1976). Early coins are also discussed and illustrated in Chalmeta, *Invasion e Islamizacion*, pp. 242–5.

35. For a full discussion of the history and historiography of Pelayo, see Collins, *Arab Conquest*, pp. 141–51, in which he suggests that Pelayo may have been a local lord like Theodemir with his power base in the north-west.

the first stage in the long struggle to expel the Muslims from Spain and has acquired a legendary importance.

At the time the Muslims were much more concerned to invade France, which offered prospects of booty wholly lacking in the inhospitable valleys of the Cantabrian mountains. Details are sketchy, but there were at least four expeditions, the first launched at the very beginning of the conquests, the other three led by the governors in person. In 721 al-Samḥ b. Mālik al-Khawlānī led an expedition against Toulouse on which he himself was killed, and in the summer of 725 'Anbasa b. Suḥaym al-Kalbī led a lightning raid right up the Rhone valley to Burgundy where the army pillaged Autun. Finally, the popular and well-respected governor of al-Andalus, 'Abd al-Rāḥmān b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ğāfiqī, led an expedition through western France which was finally and disastrously defeated by Charles Martel at the battle of Poitiers (actually fought at Moussais la Bataille, to the north of Poitiers) in October 732.³⁶

Historians from Gibbon onwards saw the battle of Poitiers as a major turning point and an event which marked the end of the great Muslim conquests which had begun a century before. More recently, scholars have tended to play down its effect: it was clearly significant in establishing the power of Charles Martel and the Carolingians in France, but it also had profound consequences in Muslim Spain. It signalled the end of the *ghanīma* (booty) economy. Up to this point pressure on resources in al-Andalus could be relieved by raiding and dissatisfied people had the opportunity to acquire more wealth. It was a popular activity: Ibn Idhārī, writing around 1300, looked back with nostalgia to the simplicities of these early, vigorous days: 'In those days the people of al-Andalus were admirable and excellent, determined in Holy War and eager for God's rewards so they threw themselves on the Christians (*Rūm*) in warfare and siege.' These were not wars of expansion and no attempt seems to have been made by the Muslims to settle any area north of Narbonne. The purposes of the raids were to take booty and to establish the prestige of the governor, whose most important public functions were the leadership of the Muslims in prayer in the mosque and in battle against the infidel. After 732 these opportunities were no longer available to anything like the same extent. The Muslims of al-Andalus were obliged to live off the finite resources of their own adopted country and competition for revenues and status soon gave rise to savage feuds.

36. For the Poitiers campaign see Lévi-Provençal, *HEM*, i, pp. 61–5; Chalmeta, *Invasion e Islamizacion*, pp. 284–8.

The coming of the Syrians, 741–56

This first phase of Muslim rule was brought to an end by a major upheaval in North Africa and its side-effects in al-Andalus. In 740 there was a Berber uprising against Arab rule. The main reasons for this seem to have been fiscal. During the period of conquest and expansion, the Arabs had been happy to grant their Berber followers the tax privileges which went with being full members of the Muslim community. With the end of expansion, the governor and financial administrator of Egypt, 'Ubayd Allāh b. al-Habhab, tried to impose the *kharāj* (land tax) on these Berbers and reduce them to a subordinate status in order to increase the revenue yield now required to pay the Syrian army, the backbone of the caliphate. Further fuel was added to their justifiable resentment by the practice of taking Berber children for the harems of the Umayyad elite. Among some Berbers, these resentments led to the adoption of Kharijite beliefs. The Kharijites, a puritanical sect which tried to preserve the virtue of the earliest days of Islam, as they saw it, rejected the authority of the Umayyad caliphs and refused to pay taxes to them.

In a very short period of time, the whole Maghreb had slipped from the control of the governors. In response to the complete defeat of the local forces, the Caliph Hishām (724–43) set about recruiting a new army in Syria. Syria at this time was divided into a number of fairly small administrative units called *junds* which were used as the basis on which the army was raised. Soldiers were recruited from the *junds* of Qinnasrīn, Hims, Damascus and Jordan and on their way to North Africa they were joined by soldiers from Egypt who were held to form a separate *jund*. These *junds* were divided by more than bureaucratic lines: by the middle Umayyad period all of them were dominated by one or other of the major tribal groups, Qays/Muḍar or Yemen.

The origins of the division between northern or Qays/Muḍar Arab tribes and southern or Yemen has been the subject of considerable controversy. In theory these groups were super-tribes, united by a common ancestry against their foes, but this genealogical theory disguised parties based on regional and political interests. To add to the confusion, it would seem that these labels meant different things in different areas. In Syria the division was basically between those tribes (Yemen) which were established in the area before the coming of Islam and the others (Qays/Muḍar) which migrated northwards from Arabia in the aftermath of the Muslim

conquests. These divisions had been sharpened and made much more acute at the bloody battle of Marj Rāhiṭ in 684 when the Yemen supporters of the Umayyads had defeated their Qaysī opponents, inflicting injuries which were never forgotten. Subsequently there had been some reconciliation between the two parties and Qaysīs too supported the Umayyads, but the rift remained and increasingly undermined the power of the Umayyad caliphate. Of the *junds* at this time, Damascus and especially Qinnasrīn were Qaysī-dominated, Hims, Jordan and Palestine were Yemenī, as were most of the Egyptians.

The military expedition against the Berbers was led by a Qaysī commander, Kulthūm b. 'Iyād, with his nephew Balj b. Bishr al-Qushayrī as second-in-command. It was not a success: in September/October 741 the Muslim army was defeated on the River Sebou in northern Morocco and the survivors, about 10,000 strong, now led by Balj b. Bishr, fled north to Ceuta. Here, completely cut off from their homeland, ragged and starving, they were in desperate straits. In vain they appealed to the governor of al-Andalus, Ibn Qatan, for help, but he refused.

Meanwhile, the Berber uprising in North Africa had resulted in a similar upheaval in al-Andalus. There had been rumblings of discontent in the peninsula before. According to the *Chronicle* of 754, a Berber (the *Chronicle* distinguishes the Berbers (*Mauri*) from Arabs (*Saraceni*)) called Munuz, hearing that his fellow Berbers in North Africa were being oppressed by the Arabs, raised a rebellion in the northern frontiers of al-Andalus, possibly trying to establish an independent lordship in Cerdanya. This was probably in 729. The next year Munuz made an alliance with Eudo, Duke of Aquitaine, but in 731 the governor, 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Ghāfiqī, launched an expedition against him and he was finally surrounded in Cerdanya and was obliged to commit suicide in order to evade capture.³⁷

The rebellion of 741 was much more serious. 'Ubayd Allāh b. al-Habhab had appointed 'Uqba b. al-Hajjāj al-Salūlī as governor of al-Andalus to implement his strict fiscal policies. The Andalusi Arabs were fiercely opposed to him because the policies threatened their fiscal status and, perhaps, because they feared it would provoke the Berbers of al-Andalus to a similar rebellion.

In 740 there was a *coup d'état* in which 'Uqba was forced to resign

37. The only source which mentions this is the *Chronicle* of 754, cap. 79: for the chronology see Chalmeta, *Invasion e Islamizacion*, pp. 282–3.

and was replaced by 'Abd al-Malik b. Qaṭān al-Fihrī, a venerable figure chosen by the people of al-Andalus. It seems, however, that this change was too late to avoid an uprising. In the autumn of 741 there was a major revolt in the north-west and the Arabs were driven out of all the lands north of the Cordillera Central, so putting an end to the ephemeral Muslim occupation of this area.

The Berbers marched south towards Cordoba and Ibn Qaṭān found himself unable to resist them effectively. In his panic he looked across the Straits for allies. Balj and 'Abd al-Malik began to do business. Balj's men were so desperate that he was prepared to agree to almost any conditions which would see them fed, and he accepted that his men should fight the Berbers and then return to North Africa when their work was done. His only real stipulation was that they should return as a group, rather than be dispersed to be at the mercy of their enemies. In the spring of 742 the Syrians were helped to cross into al-Andalus.

The battle-hardened Syrians under Balj joined the Andalusi Arabs led by Ibn Qaṭān to defeat the Berbers in a fierce battle near Toledo. In the aftermath of victory, the Syrians were reluctant to leave this fertile and promising land, where, we are told, the Arabs lived 'like kings', and return to the hardships of North Africa. Relations between Balj and 'Abd al-Malik soon broke down and Balj launched a *coup* which left the old governor dead and himself and his Syrian followers in control. This could not go unavenged and the old-established Arabs (now called *Baladiyūn* (people of the country) in distinction to the *Shāmiyūn* or Syrians) launched a counter-attack, led by two of 'Abd al-Malik's sons. In August 742 this attempt was decisively defeated near Cordoba, but Balj was mortally wounded in the battle. Nonetheless, the Syrians remained in possession of Cordoba and chose a new governor from their own ranks who defeated the opposition, composed of both Arabs and Berbers, which had regrouped in the Merida area. Many Arabs of distinguished lineage were sold cheaply as slaves.³⁸

The next year (743), a new governor was sent from Qayrawān by Hanzala b. Ṣafwān, apparently in response to a petition from Andalusis of all parties who wanted peace. Abū'l-Khaṭṭār al-Husām b. Dirār al-Kalbī was a member of the Yemeni aristocracy of Damascus (Kalb were one of the leading Yemenite tribes of Syria) and he attempted to solve the outstanding problems of the province. He first secured the release of all the Arab and Berber captives and

38. For these events see Chalmeta, *Invasion e Islamizacion*, pp. 307–27.

then set about providing for the Syrians who now clearly had to be accommodated in al-Andalus.

Abū'l-Khaṭṭār, perhaps on the advice of Count Ardabast, settled the Syrians in a methodical way. They were already organised in *junds* and each *jund* was settled in a different area, chosen, allegedly, because it resembled their Syrian homeland. Thus the *jund* of Damascus was settled at Elvira (Granada), the *jund* of Jordan in Rayyu (Malaga and Archidona), the *jund* of Palestine in Sidonia, the *jund* of Hims in Seville and Niebla, the *jund* of Qinnasrīn in Jaen. The *jund* of Egypt, possibly the largest, was divided between the Algarve in the west and Tudmīr, the lands originally governed by the treaty with the Visigoth Theodemir which now seem to have been opened up for Muslim settlement, in the east. It is said that they were given a third of the property of the local people to live off, though again it is not clear whether this should be considered as revenues or actual lands to cultivate: certainly the image of these violent Syrian warriors suddenly settling down to plough the fields, prune the vines and dig the irrigation ditches is faintly improbable. It is most likely that the Syrians were given a third of the revenues paid by the people of the areas their *jund* was settled in. They were not concentrated in Cordoba or other garrison cities but dispersed throughout the area of the *jund*. The limited evidence suggests that they were responsible for collecting the revenues themselves and that they were obliged to pay the government *muqāṭa'āt*, basically a fixed sum, from the revenues they collected. In exchange for this livelihood, the Syrians were obliged to do military service.³⁹

The events of 741–43 profoundly changed the political character of Muslim Spain. It substantially increased the Arab element in the population, especially in those rural areas in the south which were to be the heartland of al-Andalus for centuries to come. It also increased the Syrian element. Most of the early settlers were ultimately of south Arabian origin, but the new arrivals came from Syria and the area the Arabs called al-Jazīra (the island), that is, the steppe lands of northern Iraq and Syria between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Many of these had long-standing loyalty to the Umayyad family. Along with the Arab tribesmen, there also arrived a significant number of *mawālī* of the Umayyad family, probably non-Arab native Syrians or prisoners of war from other regions of

39. See Chalmeta, *Invasion e Islamizacion*, pp. 331–5; for a full discussion of the settlement and fiscal obligation of the *junds*, see E. Manzano Moreno, 'El asentamiento y la organizacion de los jund-s sirios en al-Andalus', *Al-Qantara* xiv (1993), 330–8.

the Muslim empire. They formed an important group without tribal affiliations, owing their loyalty only to the ruling dynasty, and their presence in al-Andalus was vital to the later success of the Umayyads in establishing themselves as rulers.

The most immediate consequence was also the most destructive, the introduction into al-Andalus of the fierce Qays/Mudar versus Yemen disputes. Previously the overwhelming dominance of Yemen had meant that there was little conflict, but the arrival of Balj, aggressively Qaysī, and his followers changed that. The defeat and temporary enslavement of many of the Yemenis added bitterness from their side to an already inflammatory mixture. It was difficult for any governor to break free from the constraints of the feud, since not to be generous to members of their own group would leave them without any reliable support. It was probably this insecurity which led Abū'l-Khaṭṭār, an outsider to al-Andalus without any local power base of his own, to rely on and favour the Yemenis. The Qaysīs could not afford to tolerate a governor who would only dispense favours to their hated rivals, and they found a new leader in al-Ṣumayl b. Ḥātim al-Kilābī, hard-bitten, brutal and fanatically devoted to the Qaysī cause.

War could not long be averted. The Qaysīs were fewer in number but stronger in the Cordoba area and possibly more effective militarily. Al-Ṣumayl set out to divide his enemies and succeeded in winning over the leader of the Yemeni tribes of Lakhm and Judhām. Both these tribes had long been settled in Syria and may have felt more in common with other Syrians than with the Yemeni tribes of South Arabia. This coalition rose in revolt and in April 745 defeated Abū'l-Khaṭṭār, who was taken prisoner but was soon rescued. There followed a period of confusion when different members of the coalition tried to take control as governor, until in January 747 al-Ṣumayl, who had remained behind the scenes, not claiming power for himself, produced an outside candidate, Yūsuf b. 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Fihrī.

It was a shrewd choice. Yūsuf was already an old man and al-Ṣumayl could expect him to be a pliable instrument. At the same time, he had positive advantages. He was a direct descendant of 'Uqba b. Nāfi', hero of the early Muslim conquests in North Africa. Fihr, being a branch of Quraysh, were usually considered to belong to the Qaysī group, but Quraysh, being the Prophet's tribe, had always occupied an intermediate position somewhat outside tribal divisions and could hope to attract loyalty from all parties. In addition, the family had built up many contacts and alliances among

the Berbers and could hope for support from some Berber groups. These assets recommended this otherwise rather undistinguished old gentleman to al-Şumayl and were also to mean that the Fihriṣ were to be the only serious rivals to the Umayyads for control of the whole of al-Andalus.

Yūsuf began to exercise his power as his patron would have expected, excluding Yemenis from the fruits of office.⁴⁰ In 747 Yūsuf and al-Şumayl, aided, we are told, by the tradesmen of Cordoba including the butchers with their knives, defeated the Yemeni counter-attack at Secunda, on the south bank of the river opposite the city of Cordoba. Yūsuf began to grow in confidence. The collapse of the Umayyad caliphate of Damascus in 747–50 in the face of 'Abbasid attacks from the east meant that he became an independent ruler. He felt strong enough to remove al-Şumayl to Zaragoza where he occupied himself helping victims of the terrible famine of the early 750s. But the old enmities were merely dormant. In 755 al-Şumayl was besieged in Zaragoza by Yemeni elements, Yūsuf was powerless to help him and he was only saved by an expedition of Qaysī volunteers from the south. It was into this environment of deadly factional conflict that the emissaries of 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Mu'awiya, the Umayyad, arrived.

During this period of instability, the northern frontier of al-Andalus stabilised.⁴¹ In the immediate aftermath of the conquest the Muslims penetrated as far as the north coast, leaving only a few upland valleys in the Pyrenees and isolated pockets of resistance on the northern slopes of the Picos de Europa; the sources even speak of a Muslim 'governor' in Gijon. Most of the plains of the Duero and the mountains of Galicia and Cantabria were occupied, in so far as there was a Muslim presence at all, by groups of Berbers, but we know very little about this and there is no record of permanent or significant occupation in these areas; nor were there any major campaigns, the Arabs finding France much more rewarding territory. Almost by default, the areas north of the Duero slipped out of Muslim hands after the Berber rebellion of 741 caused many of them to come south where they were heavily defeated in battle. A long famine which began in 750 seems to have caused many of the survivors to leave for North Africa. The Christian King Alfonso I (739–57) was able to establish some fortified outposts in the Duero plains and to raid even further south. The Cordillera Central marked

40. Yūsuf's governorate is described in Chalmeta, *Invasion e Islamización*, pp. 335–48.

41. For the historical geography of the frontier regions see Manzano Moreno, *Frontera*.

the most northerly limits of Muslim occupation in the western half of the peninsula, Coimbra, Coria, Talavera, Madrid, Guadalajara and Medinaceli all being frontier settlements. This position was hardly to change for three centuries. To the north of these settlements, the land seems to have been almost completely uninhabited except by wandering shepherds until the southernmost outposts of Christian settlement were encountered at places like Leon and Astorga.⁴²

The eastern sector of the frontier presented a very different picture. Here Muslim settlement pressed up to and into the Pyrenees; Pamplona, Tudela, Huesca, Girona and Narbonne were in Muslim hands. Only in Narbonne, captured by Charles Martel's son Pepin, probably in 759,⁴³ was their rule challenged. The northern outposts of Muslim settlement lay not on an east–west axis but on a north-east to south-west line, and this was to remain the position until well into the twelfth century.

By 757 the Muslim presence in Andalus was clearly there to stay. Local resistance had effectively disappeared, a new generation of Arabs and Berbers born in al-Andalus was growing up and converts were beginning to be made among the indigenous people. But the new conquerors had conspicuously failed to develop a viable political system. After the 'Abbasid revolution of 750, al-Andalus was no longer part of a wider Muslim empire: it remained to be seen what alternative polity would emerge to fill the gap.

42. See C. Sanchez-Albornoz, *Despoblacion y Repoblacion del valle del Duero* (Buenos Aires, 1966).

43. Manzano Moreno, *Frontera*, pp. 75–7.

CHAPTER TWO

The Umayyad Amirate, 756–852¹

‘Abd al-Rahmān I and the establishment of the Umayyads, 755–88

The Umayyad family were members of the Prophet’s tribe, Quraysh, and distant cousins of Muḥammad himself.² In the early days of Islam, the Umayyad chief Abū Sufyān had been one of the leading opponents of the new religion, but, following the triumph of Muḥammad after 628, Abū Sufyān’s son Mu‘āwiya rapidly became one of the most important figures in the early Muslim state. After the conquest of Syria he was appointed governor and, in 661, with the assassination of Muḥammad’s cousin and son-in-law, ‘Alī, he became Caliph of the entire Muslim world (661–80). Mu‘āwiya’s direct line died out with his son Yazīd in 684. After a vigorous civil war between the supporters of the Umayyads and their enemies, the caliphate was seized by Mu‘āwiya’s second cousin Marwān b. al-Hakam (684–85) and his son ‘Abd al-Malik (685–705), so inaugurating a second Umayyad dynasty, sometimes known as the Marwanids.

For half a century, the Umayyads ruled the whole of the Islamic world from Sind and Samarkand in the east to newly conquered al-Andalus in the west, but there was always opposition from those

1. Secondary sources for the early Umayyad amirate are very limited. For the reign of ‘Abd al-Rahmān I we have the final chapter of P. Chalmeta, *Invasión e Islamización: la sumisión de Hispania y la formación de al-Andalus* (Madrid, 1994), pp. 349–87. Thereafter, the fundamental account remains E. Lévi-Provençal, *HEM*, i, pp. 139–278. E. Manzano Moreno, *La Frontera de Al-Andalus en época de los Omeyas* (Madrid, 1991) is invaluable, not just for the study of the frontier zones but for wider questions of the political structure of the amirate.

2. For the role of the Umayyads in the eastern Islamic world, H. Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (London, 1986), pp. 82–123, and G.R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam* (London, 1986).

who felt that the hereditary monarchy of a family who had been among Muhammad's leading enemies was unIslamic and those who resented the domination of the Muslim world by the Syrian military supporters of the dynasty. From 747 to 750 there was a vast upheaval, the 'Abbasid revolution, which swept the Umayyads and their Syrian supporters from power. Most of the members of the ruling house were rounded up and executed, but a few, mostly less prominent, individuals were able to lie low and make their escape.

One such was 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Mu'āwiya, a young grandson of the great Caliph Hishām (724–43). After some hair-breadth escapes, he fled to North Africa, accompanied only by a few *mawālī*, among them Badr, later to be his right-hand man in al-Andalus. His first intention seems to have been to secure Ifrīqiya (Tunisia), but the governor, 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Fihri, was hostile and he was obliged to seek refuge among his mother's relations, the Nafza Berbers. Thwarted in Africa, he sent Badr to make contact with the Umayyad *mawālī* among the Syrian *junds* in al-Andalus. There were said to have been 500 of them in the *dīwān*, led by 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Uthmān and 'Abd Allāh b. Khālid of Damascus and Yūsuf b. Bukht of Qinnasrīn. At first they tried to attract the support of the Qaysī leader, al-Şumayl, then under siege in Zaragoza, but he refused, fearing that 'Abd al-Rahmān would like to make himself effective ruler, so they turned to the opposition Yemenis for support. In the early autumn of 755, after more than five years on the run, 'Abd al-Rahmān crossed to Almuñecar on the south coast of al-Andalus.

At first he was given refuge in the nearby homes of his *mawālī*, Ibn Khālid and Abū 'Uthmān, protected by 300 horsemen. After the attempt to reach a compromise with Yūsuf al-Fihri and al-Şumayl, 'Abd al-Rahmān began to make contact with Yemeni leaders throughout the south. By the next spring (756) he had recruited an army of about 2,000 Umayyad *mawālī* and Yemeni *jundis* and marched on Cordoba. Here his supporters fought and defeated the Qaysī army of Yūsuf and al-Şumayl and, in May 756, he entered the capital.

The proclamation of 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Mu'āwiya as Amir in the mosque of Cordoba on Friday 14 May 756 was not the end of the Umayyad seizure of power in al-Andalus, but only the end of the beginning. The new Amir was determined to build up a secure power base in al-Andalus which would enable him to survive and pass on the title to his descendants in a way no previous governor had been able to do. He also intended to establish himself as an independent ruler. After the first year, he no longer had the names of the 'Abbasid caliphs of the east acknowledged in the Friday prayers in

Cordoba, and while he retained the fairly modest title of Amir, he acknowledged no temporal superior.

‘Abd al-Rahmān had a number of advantages over his rivals for power. He was a member of the Prophet’s tribe of Quraysh and of the family of the Umayyad caliphs: no-one could deny his high descent. On the other hand there were many other Qurashīs in al-Andalus, notably Yūsuf al-Fīhrī himself, and the Umayyad caliphs had been violently and completely rejected by the eastern Islamic world, which might have encouraged sympathy among the Syrians of al-Andalus but not much respect. The Umayyads were very much outsiders as well: as far as we can tell, no member of the extensive clan had ever visited al-Andalus before. ‘Abd al-Rahmān’s father Mu‘āwiya had died when he was a boy and had not played an important role in the later Umayyad caliphate, and he himself was still a young man of 26 with no real political experience.

In addition to the reputation, being an Umayyad did bring ‘Abd al-Rahmān a decisive advantage in terms of a small but committed band of supporters and the opportunity to recruit more. The band of supporters consisted of the Umayyad *mawālī* in al-Andalus with whom Badr had originally made contact, notably Abū ‘Uthmān, his son-in-law ‘Abd Allāh b. Khālid and Yūsuf b. Bukht. To these were added ‘Abd al-Karīm and ‘Abd al-Malik, grandsons of one of the leaders of the original conquest of Spain, Mughīth al-Rūmī, himself said to have been a *mawlā* of the Umayyad Caliph al-Walīd, and Tammām b. ‘Alqama, who was probably a member or *mawlā* of Thaqif, a tribe with close ties to the Umayyads. These *mawālī* seem to have had extensive possessions in Cordoba and the lands of Elvira and Rayyu, but they had little prestige in the tribal politics and rivalries which dominated al-Andalus and the arrival of the Umayyad gave them their only hope of real political power. But this group was not restricted to al-Andalus: there were Umayyad *mawālī* in other parts of the Muslim world who would be keen to come and support the new regime.

In addition to the *mawālī*, many members of the Umayyad family continued to arrive from the east and they too were committed supporters of the new Amir. The most important of these was ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Umar b. Marwān: it was he who advised ‘Abd al-Rahmān to drop the name of the ‘Abbasid Caliph al-Mansūr from the Friday prayers and he became governor of Seville and one of the Amir’s most reliable generals. In this way, ‘Abd al-Rahmān built up a following, based on the *mawālī* and his own clan and geographically centred in Cordoba and the south-east, that transcended the tribal

followings which his opponents could command and which was entirely dedicated to his success. None of his rivals could achieve that.

‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Mu‘āwiya was to reign as Amir for 33 years after his proclamation at Cordoba, and the length of his rule was a major factor in the success of the Umayyads; if he had died or been killed as so many other governors had been after a few years, the Umayyad regime would no doubt have followed its ephemeral predecessors into obscurity.

‘Abd al-Rahmān embarked on a policy of ensuring that he was acknowledged as Amir throughout the whole peninsula, but he faced many rivals in al-Andalus. In the Arabic chronicles, with their marked Umayyad/Cordovan sympathies, those who resisted are portrayed as rebels against a legitimate Umayyad authority; in reality they were local chiefs or strong men attempting to preserve their influence against expanding and encroaching Umayyad power. The previous amirs of Cordoba had had little coercive power beyond the strength of their own following: real influence in the provinces remained in the hands of the leaders of the *junds* or other local notables. One of ‘Abd al-Rahmān’s main objectives was to expand the authority of Cordoba throughout the Muslim-held areas of the Iberian peninsula.

In these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that many people resented the attempts of the early Umayyad amirs to rob them of their autonomy and impose a measure of civil and fiscal control over them. There were other reasons for resentment too. The arriving members of the Umayyad family needed estates and, as the Syrian *jundis* were not property owners, lands had to be confiscated from the Baladis and the Christians. It was at this time that the bulk of the estates of Count Ardabast were confiscated and, probably, that the areas covered by the pact with Theodemir were opened up for Muslim settlement.³

‘Abd al-Rahmān’s first problem was to destroy the power of his predecessors, Yūsuf al-Fihri and al-Šumayl, who still remained in the field despite their recent defeat. At first a compromise was arranged and Yūsuf was able to keep his possessions and reside in Cordoba, but it appears that he soon found this intolerable and he escaped to Merida where he raised a large army of Berbers. However, he was defeated by troops loyal to ‘Abd al-Rahmān and in 759/60 was murdered near Toledo. The Fihris enjoyed extensive

3. See Chalmeta, *Invasion e Islamizacion*, pp. 262–3.

support among the Berbers and were the only family who could rival the Umayyads; they were not to give up easily. It was seven years before 'Abd al-Rahmān felt strong enough to challenge their hold on Toledo. In 764 he sent two of his most trusted commanders, Badr and Tammām b. 'Alqama, against the city where Hishām b. 'Urwa al-Fihri was holding out and he was captured and executed. There were at least two other attempts by Fihris to establish themselves in the peninsula. The first of these came in 778–79 when 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Habīb al-Fihri, known as the Slav from his blond complexion and blue eyes, landed in the east of the country and attracted some support before being killed by one of his Berber supporters. Then, in the autumn of 785,⁴ almost at the end of 'Abd al-Rahmān's reign, Yūsuf al-Fihri's son Muḥammad gathered an army in the Toledo area. Defeated by the Umayyad troops, he fled west towards Coria where he was isolated and killed. 'Abd al-Rahmān went on to chastise the Nafza Berbers in the area, presumably because they had supported the rebel. The Fihris felt they had as good a claim to al-Andalus as the Umayyads and they could mobilise widespread support among the Berbers, but they seem to have been no match for the Umayyad *mawālī* and their allies among the Syrian *jundīs*.

Another threat was posed by agents of the 'Abbasid caliph Abū Ja'far al-Mansūr. Al-Mansūr made one serious attempt to regain control of al-Andalus in 763. He sent no troops but a standard and a diploma of investiture as Amir of al-Andalus. The local leader was al-'Alā b. al-Mughīth al-Yahṣubī from Beja in southern Portugal, who gathered a large number of supporters in the west of al-Andalus. 'Abd al-Rahmān left Cordoba and moved west to the powerful fortress at Carmona, high on the hill where the castle still dominates the surrounding plains. Here he fought what was probably the most desperate encounter of his reign. The chronicler Ibn Idhārī takes up the story:⁵

He fortified himself there with his *mawālī*, his faithful supporters [*thiqāt*] and the rest of his men and al-'Alā b. al-Mughīth began a close investment. When he had besieged the town for many days and the siege dragged on, al-'Alā's army began to get restless. 'Abd al-Rahmān knew that they were impatient and thinking of bridles and saddles and he ordered a fire to be built and he ordered his

4. For the dating of al-Rāzī, quoted by Ibn Idhārī, see *Al-Bayān al-mughrib fi akhbār al-Andalus wa'l-Maghrib*, ed. E. Lévi-Provençal and G.S. Colin (Leiden, 1948), ii, pp. 57–8.

5. Ibid., pp. 51–2.

companions to burn the scabbards of their swords and said to them, 'Come out with me against this crowd, determined never to return!' They were seven hundred of them, courageous men and famous heroes. So they took their swords in their hands searching for their enemy. The battle lasted long until God did His marvellous work and the army and companions of al-'Alā quaked and fled and their fate became a warning for the people of the world. Al-'Alā was among the first to be killed.

Only by such desperate actions did the Umayyad amirate survive. The dead head of the defeated rebel was embalmed and sent east with a merchant who left it one night with a note attached in the markets of Qayrawān, the nearest 'Abbasid outpost (in Tunisia, other accounts say it was taken to Medina and left outside the caliphal tent). When al-Mansūr was informed he is said to have remarked, 'We all belong to God. We sent this miserable man to his death. Praise be to God who has put the sea between me and this devil!' It hardly needs to be said that this imaginative story appears only in Andalusi histories⁶ and finds no place in 'Abbasid chronicles. This débâcle meant the end of direct 'Abbasid interference. After this there were exchanges of abusive correspondence, but the Umayyads of Spain posed no real threat to the Baghdad regime and the 'Abbasids were soon preoccupied with problems much nearer home.

The rebellion of al-'Alā b. al-Mughith was fuelled by local grievances as well as 'Abbasid encouragement. 'Abd al-Rahmān was determined to assert his power over the Syrian *junds*. Before the coming of the Umayyads, the leaders (*ra'īs*, pl. *ru'asā'*) of the *junds* were either self-appointed or chosen by their followers: they were effectively independent and could make war or alliances as they saw fit. 'Abd al-Rahmān set out to replace the old-style leaders with his own supporters. The clearest example of this comes from the *junds* of Egypt and Hims settled in Beja and Seville. It seems that 'Abd al-Rahmān had appointed the Umayyad 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Umar b. Marwān as governor of Seville and the west and that this was represented by local leaders who felt that this was an encroachment on their power. Al-'Alā had attracted widespread support in the area and 'Abd al-Rahmān is said to have been worried that the soldiers from Seville in his own army would desert to the rebel cause.⁷ In 766 one Sa'id al-Maṭarī rebelled in Niebla and took over Seville

6. See for example *Al-Bayān; Akhbār al-Majmū'a*, ed. and Spanish translation E. Lafuente y Alcantara (Madrid, 1867), p. 103.

7. Al-Banyān ii, p. 52.

before being killed by the Amir. In the same year he had another leader from the area, Abū'l-Sabbāh Yahyā al-Yahsubī, executed in Cordoba. The dead man's followers sought revenge and the people of Seville joined his cousins in an attempt to take Cordoba by surprise. It was not until 774 that the rebellion was finally defeated by 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Umar. This seems to have completed the defeat of the *jundi* leaders in this area and their subjection to effective control from Cordoba.⁸

Another ideological challenge came from an 'Alid pretender. In the eastern Islamic world, the members of the house of 'Alī, first cousin to the Prophet and husband of his daughter Fātīma, were the most powerful focus of opposition to both Umayyad and 'Abbasid caliphates. Most of their following, however, came from Iraq and points east and they had little support among the Syrians who formed the majority of the Arab settlers in al-Andalus. Heterodox religious opinions were more widespread among the Berbers, however. In North Africa at this time, these opinions usually took the form of Kharijism, but in 768 and 770 a Berber of the tribe of Miknāsa called Shaqyā b. 'Abd al-Wāhid led a revolt, claiming to be related to the 'Alids.⁹ His rebellion began in Santaver, in the hills around Cuenca, but for the next nine years he dominated much of the sparsely inhabited upland country between Santaver and Coria and Medellin far to the west. It was a guerrilla war, the Berbers retreating to the mountains on approach of the Amir's army and returning to the villages and plains when they had gone. The rebellion was an irritant, but the soi-disant Fatimid seems to have attracted no support amongst the Arabs or the town dwellers and 'Abd al-Rahmān was also able to make an alliance with Hilāl al-Madyūnī, described as head (*ra's*) of the Berbers in the east of al-Andalus. In the end, in 776–77, Shaqyā was taken by treachery and killed. Although he clearly commanded support among the Berbers, there is little evidence that this, or indeed any other of the Berber disturbances of the time, were motivated by Berber resentment against Arab control. 'Abd al-Rahmān had Berber supporters and Berber opponents just as he had Arab supporters and Arab opponents; the real distinction was between those who threw in their lot with Cordoba and those who were determined to maintain their own local independence.

8. For the chronology of these rebellions see Lévi-Provençal, *HEM*, i, pp. 110–12; for the political analysis see E. Mauzano Moreno, 'El asentamiento y la organizacion de los jundi-s sirios en al-Andalus', *Al-Qantara* xiv (1993), 338–46.

9. The revolt is discussed in Manzano Moreno, *Frontera*, pp. 238–49.

There were areas of localised resistance in the west and north of the peninsula. Not surprisingly, 'Abd al-Rahmān had difficulty imposing his authority on distant Zaragoza.¹⁰ The Arab notables of Zaragoza and the Ebro valley resisted Umayyad attempts to take the city as they had resisted the attempts of previous Amirs, and the tradition of local autonomy was well established. In about 774 Sulaymān b. Yaqzān al-A'rābī, lord of Barcelona and Girona, and al-Husayn b. Yahyā b. Sa'd b. 'Ubāda, descendant of a famous Madinan companion of the Prophet in Zaragoza, were the main powers in the area. In order to maintain his independent status, Sulaymān sent a mission to Charlemagne's court at Paderborn to ask his support, probably in return for the overlordship of Zaragoza. Charlemagne arrived in the Ebro valley in 778 but al-Husayn refused to cooperate with the Emperor who, having no siege engines, had to withdraw, humiliated, from the walls of the city. It was during his return journey that the Basques attacked his rear guard in the Pyrenean pass at Roncesvalles, giving rise to the legends which are recounted in the Song of Roland, though the first text of this great epic does not appear for three centuries after the event and the historical detail has become wildly confused.

In the aftermath of this débâcle, Sulaymān was executed by his erstwhile ally al-Husayn, but his sons inherited his position in Barcelona and Girona. It seems that the Amir 'Abd al-Rahmān was alarmed by this turn of events. In 781 he led a military expedition to demand the submission of al-Husayn b. Yahyā and to re-establish Muslim control in the Upper Ebro valley. At first al-Husayn accepted the Amir's authority and was confirmed as governor of the city, but the next year he threw off this allegiance. 'Abd al-Rahmān returned and assaulted the city with siege engines (*manjaniq*), and al-Husayn was captured and executed and severe measures taken against the townspeople. The whole complex episode shows how the Umayyad Amir tried to establish his authority over the local magnates by a mixture of diplomacy and occasional force but that, as long as they were content to accept his overlordship, he was prepared to leave them in peace. By the end of his reign, Merida and Toledo were being governed by his sons, Hishām and Sulaymān, but it is not clear that the Umayyads exercised any direct control

10. The complex events in Zaragoza are discussed in Chalmeta, *Invasion e Islamizacion*, pp. 367–81, whose account I have largely followed. Manzano Moreno, *Frontera*, discusses the history and status of these local magnate families (pp. 208–23) and 'Abd al-Rahmān's attempts to control the city (pp. 315–18). M.J. Viguera Molins gives a simplified account of events (*Aragon Musulman*, Zaragoza, 1981, pp. 57–65).

in the Ebro valley. In one area they certainly did not: it was in 785, according to the *Chronicle of Moissac*,¹¹ that the inhabitants of Girona threw off the authority of the sons of Sulaymān b. Yaqṣān and handed their city over to the Carolingians. The event produced no reaction in Cordoba and is not noted by the Arab chroniclers.

Not all of 'Abd al-Rahmān's energies were devoted to assuring his military control over al-Andalus. His reign saw the confirmation of the position of Cordoba as the capital of al-Andalus. The status of the city was confirmed when 'Abd al-Rahmān built a country palace at al-Ruṣāfa to the north-east of the town, in addition to the Qaṣr in the centre of town, and in 785 he began the construction of the mosque which still survives, with many later additions, to the present day.

The reigns of Hishām I and al-Hakām I, 788–822

'Abd al-Rahmān b. Mu'āwiya died on 7 October 788. His achievements had been enormous, but he had put them all in jeopardy by his hesitation about the succession. While it was clear he intended that the amirate should remain hereditary within the Umayyad house, it was not certain which of his sons should succeed him. The principle of primogeniture, which became so important to the ruling houses of mediaeval Christendom, was never established in the Umayyad family: designation by the previous ruler and acceptance by other members of the family and their supporters were the determining factors in deciding who amongst its members should succeed. 'Abd al-Rahmān had three sons who emerged as possible candidates: Sulaymān, who had been born in the east and was now in his early forties, Hishām, who had been born in Cordoba in 757, and 'Abd Allāh, who does not seem to have been a serious candidate at this stage but was to become an important figure in years to come. Neither Sulaymān nor Hishām were at their father's deathbed, Sulaymān being in Toledo, Hishām in Merida. Some say that Hishām was his father's final choice, others that the dying Amir told 'Abd Allāh to acknowledge whichever of the two reached Cordoba first: Hishām, he said, had the advantages of piety and a good education, Sulaymān of age, bravery and the devotion of the Syrians.¹²

11. Quoted in Lévi-Provençal, *HEM*, ii, p. 128.

12. Ibn Idhārī, *Al-Bayān*, ii, p. 61.

It only took six days for Hishām to come from Merida, and 'Abd Allāh greeted him as ruler and handed over the seal of office, but his other brother was not prepared to accept this verdict and gathered his supporters to march south. There was a short, sharp conflict near Jaen and Sulaymān's men were defeated. It took almost two months for Hishām to reduce Toledo and oblige his brother to surrender, but in 789 Sulaymān was paid 60,000 *dīnārs* in cash, possibly half the annual income of the amirate at this time, and was forced to leave for North Africa and promise not to return: Umayyads might be defeated and disgraced but, at this time, they would not be executed like any common rebel, for that would undermine the status of the whole ruling house.¹³

As far as we can tell, the new amir faced little internal opposition after the defeat of his brothers. He had indirect dealings with the magnates of the Ebro valley. In 788/9 Sa'id b. al-Ḥusayn al-Anṣārī, whose father had held Zaragoza against the Umayyads in the previous reign, took the city again, proclaiming himself Amir. He was soon defeated, not by Umayyad troops but by Mūsā b. Fortūn b. Qasī, whose grandfather had been Count of the area in Visigothic times and one of the earliest and most distinguished converts to Islam.¹⁴ In 791/2 Zaragoza was taken over by Matrūḥ, the son of Sulaymān b. Yaqzān, and an expedition was sent from Cordoba to drive him out. The problem was solved, however, when Matrūḥ was murdered by one 'Amrūs b. Yūsuf while he was out hunting and the city was handed over to the Umayyad forces.

'Amrūs came from a *muwallad* (native Muslim) background and is first recorded as a *ghulām* (military page) in the service of Sulaymān b. Yaqzān and his family. He now seems to have decided to throw in his lot with the Umayyads against his old masters: he and his family were rewarded by the favour of the ruling dynasty and during the next century they became one of the most powerful families in the Upper March.¹⁵ The rise of the Banū Qasī and Banū 'Amrūs at this time, allied with the Umayyads against the leading Arab families of the area, marks the beginning of the entry of the *muwallads* into the political life of al-Andalus.

The Arab chroniclers give Hishām a pious and ascetic personality

13. Lévi-Provençal, *HEM*, ii, pp. 139–41.

14. Ibn Idhārī, *Al-Bayān*, ii, p. 62: see art. 'Banū Kasi' by P. Chalmeta in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* new edn (Leiden, 1960–), and A. Cañada Juste, 'Los Banū Qasī (714–924)', *Príncipe de Viana* clviii–clix (1980), 5–90.

15. The origins of the family are discussed in Manzano Moreno, *Frontera*, pp. 219–22.

and say that he sought to exert his authority rather by personal example and by leading the Muslims against the Christians of the north.¹⁶ His commitment to good works expressed itself in the completion of the first phase of the mosque in Cordoba, including the ablution facilities and the minaret and the repair of the bridge. Another manifestation of his piety was the sending of military expeditions against the Christians, among them a number of campaigns in the Asturias and Upper Ebro and a major attack on Narbonne and Carcassonne in 793, when the Count of Toulouse, William Short-Nose, was killed. Hishām himself did not lead these campaigns but entrusted command to the two brothers, 'Abd al-Malik and 'Abd al-Karīm b. 'Abd al-Wāhid b. Mughīth. These campaigns were important in asserting the role of the Umayyads as leaders of all the Muslims of al-Andalus and of bringing Umayyad armies to parts of the country where they would not normally penetrate. In this Hishām was establishing a precedent which would be followed by many of his successors.

'Abd al-Karīm was Hishām's chief minister until his death fairly early in the reign. The inner circle also included the secretary 'Isā b. Shuhayd, whose father had served 'Abd al-Rahmān and whose family was to provide Cordoba with bureaucrats for the next three centuries as well as one of al-Andalus's greatest poets. Hishām's modest piety, attendance at funerals and visitations of the sick earned him such a reputation that the great Medinan scholar, Mālik b. Anas, whose work so profoundly affected al-Andalus, is said to have wished that Hishām could make the pilgrimage in person (which of course he could not, Mecca and Medina being in the power of the 'Abbasid caliphs of Baghdad).

The connection with Medina was to prove very important. As far as we can tell, Andalusis never visited Damascus or Baghdad at this time, although there was a good deal of immigration from the eastern Islamic world, but they could and did go on pilgrimage to Medina and Mecca in comparatively large numbers, especially those who aspired to be *faqīhs* or *qādīs*. It was not surprising, therefore, that the knowledge of Muslim law that they picked up was the teaching of the pre-eminent Medinan master, Mālik b. Anas. Mālik (d. 795) was the founder of the oldest of the four 'orthodox' schools of Islamic law (the other three being the Ḥanbalī, the Shāfi'i and the Hanafi, all developed in the ninth century). Mālikī law, as expounded in the *Kitāb al-Muwaṭṭa'* of Mālik himself and later works,

16. See for example the character sketch in Ibn Idhārī, *Al-Bayān*, ii, pp. 65–6.

notably *al-Mudawwana al-Kubrā* of Saḥnūn of Qayrawān (d. 854), was essentially the codified practice of Medina. As such it was practical and much concerned with ordering everyday life and especially with the facilitating of trade and commerce. At the same time, the system left little room for abstract speculation and virtually none at all for innovation. The fact that it could be adopted as a fully worked out system no doubt increased its attractions for an isolated Muslim colony like that in al-Andalus, whose members wanted practical solutions rather than opportunities for debate. It also gave great power and status to a small, self-perpetuating group of scholars who were familiar with the doctrines, notably, in the first generation, Yahyā b. Yahyā al-Laythī (d. 848), a pupil of Mālik himself, who by his advice effectively controlled the appointment and dismissal of the *qādīs* of Cordoba. The adoption of the Malikite school so completely meant that al-Andalus was spared the sort of sectarian dissensions which tore Baghdad society apart in the third/tenth and early fourth/eleventh centuries. Malikism was hostile alike to Kharijism, Shi'ism and even to the more innocent forms of Sufism, and none of them really secured widespread support in al-Andalus. On the debit side, however, Malikism offered a rather formal and rigorist version of Islam, more concerned with correct performance than inspiration, and it discouraged speculation and discussion: if Cordoba was spared the conflicts that convulsed Baghdad, it also saw none of the intellectual excitement that accompanied them.

Hishām died on 17 April 796. He was careful to leave no uncertainty about the identity of his chosen successor and his son al-Ḥakam, now 26 years old, was duly accepted as Amir in Cordoba. The sources portray him as a very different character from his father. Tall, thin, haughty and strikingly dark in complexion, the new prince was to prove a formidable ruler. He was fond of women and wine, too much so some said, and was no mean poet, but he was remembered more for his cunning, his implacable ruthlessness and the awesome speed with which he reacted to news of disaffection.

And disaffection did not take long to become apparent. His father had been opposed by his two brothers, Sulaymān and 'Abd Allāh. Both these were still alive, in exile in North Africa, and they were now determined to regain their lost inheritance. The turbulent Sulaymān spent the next four years wandering the country, attempting to build up enough support, largely among the Berbers of the south, to dislodge his nephew. He was defeated in a number of encounters and was finally surrendered to al-Ḥakam by the Berber

governor of Merida, Aşbagh b. Wansūs. He was executed in 800, the first member of the ruling family to suffer this indignity.

‘Abd Allāh was much more successful in establishing a position for himself and his family in the Umayyad polity. He tried to establish himself in the Upper March, even visiting Charlemagne in Aachen to solicit his support, without much success. In 800 he returned and attempted to establish himself at Huesca, but he was forced on to Valencia. Valencia was not, at this stage, a very important Muslim centre, but ‘Abd Allāh was able to use the area as a base for negotiation with his nephew. In 802 an agreement was finally reached by which he was established in the city and given a salary (*rizq*) of 1,000 *dīnārs* a month, presumably to pay his supporters, and an annual bonus (*ma‘ārif*) of 1,000 *dīnārs*.¹⁷ This arrangement led to the Valencia area being effectively an appanage of this branch of the Umayyad family, and ‘Abd Allāh was known thereafter as al-Balansī (the Valencian). In fact the arrangement worked well: this area had never been under the effective control of Cordoba and ‘Abd Allāh’s rule brought it within the Umayyad orbit, while his military ambitions, and those of his son ‘Ubayd Allāh, were directed against the Christians of the north.

The most famous and dramatic events of al-Hakam’s reign were revolts in Cordoba itself.¹⁸ The causes of the widespread discontent are by no means clear but are probably connected with al-Hakam’s autocratic determination to stamp his authority on this and other cities and to oblige the people to pay taxes. He had also distanced himself from the local elite by recruiting a private bodyguard commanded by a local Christian, al-Rabi’ b. Theodulfo. Al-Hakam was basically trying to establish a reliable military and fiscal foundation for the amirate, but it was not surprising that some pious Muslims were numbered among the dissidents. Others said it was the natural restlessness of the Cordovans.¹⁹ The unrest occurred in two stages. In 805 there was a conspiracy among certain notables of Cordoba to mount a *coup d'état* and put al-Hakam’s cousin Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim on the throne. Unfortunately for the conspirators, Muḥammad did not share their enthusiasm for the project, which he revealed to the Amir. He sent his trusted secretary to overhear a clandestine meeting and record the names that were mentioned. This the secretary did, though being careful, according

17. The terms are given in Ibn Idhārī, *Al-Bayān*, ii, pp. 70–1.

18. These disturbances are discussed in full in Lévi-Provençal, *HEM*, i, pp. 160–73.

19. Ibn Idhārī, *Al-Bayān*, ii, pp. 85–6.

to Ibn al-Qūtiya,²⁰ to reveal his presence before his own name came up. The conspirators were treated without mercy and 72 of them were executed. It seems to have been a movement within the elite, for the names that we have are either Arab or, like Masrūr al-Khādim, members of the palace staff, and it was in no sense anti-Umayyad or an attempt at social revolution, but was rather an attempt by leaders of Muslim society to preserve status and privilege which they felt the Amir was trying to undermine.

Numerous executions followed and Cordoba was surprised and shocked by the Amir's severity. His action alienated many who had not been actively involved in the *coup* attempt. For thirteen years discontent rumbled on and the Amir fortified himself in the city and became more and more dependent on his guards. Then in 818 opposition erupted again in a spectacular manner. There was a widespread uprising in the populous suburb, usually referred to simply as al-Rabaq (the suburb), which lay to the south of the city itself, across the Guadalquivir river. The uprising attracted support from such respectable figures as the jurist Yahyā b. Yahyā al-Laythī as well as the populace in general (called the 'āmma or the *sawdā'* in the Arabic sources). The causes of the discontent are disputed. According to some sources there were complaints about taxation and especially the raising of 'unQuranic' taxes (*maghārim* or *wazā'if*) to supplement the 'legitimate' tax base of the Umayyad amirs which was very limited. Al-Ḥakam is said to have been the first ruler of al-Andalus to acquire *mamlūk* (slave) soldiers, and recruiting and maintaining the sort of full-time guard al-Ḥakam built up would certainly have required additional sources of income. The combination of resentments among the Cordovans at being excluded from power and paying more taxes brought together a broad cross-section of the population to oppose the Amir.

If the cause of the rebellion is unclear, the results are not: the insurgents attempted to cross the bridge and storm the city proper but they were beaten off by loyal troops, led by the *hājib* (chief minister), 'Abd al-Karīm b. Mughīth, while two members of the ruling family with military experience, 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Abd Allāh al-Balansī and Ishāq b. al-Mundhir, led troops out of a side gate to attack the rebels from the rear. Their defeat was total and the vengeance of the Amir was terrible. After an initial slaughter, he ordered that the suburb south of the river be destroyed and its

20. Ibn al-Qūtiya, *Ta'rikh iftitāh al-Andalus*, ed. and trans. J.M. Nichols (unpublished PhD thesis, Chapel Hill, 1975), pp. 111–15.

inhabitants driven into exile. Only a few, like the jurist Yahyā b. Yahyā al-Laythī, went into hiding and were later pardoned. The most important consequence of this diaspora was that many of the refugees went to Morocco where they settled in Fes on the opposite bank of the river from the existing colony of immigrants from Qayrawān. In this way the twin settlements which still form the core of the ancient city of Fes, the quarter of the Qarawiyīn and the quarter of the Andalusiyīn, came into existence.

The events in Cordoba overshadowed the last years of al-Hakam's reign. He seems to have become something of a recluse before his death in 822, but he did establish the succession firmly. During his last illness, leading members of the court took the oath of allegiance (*bay'a*) to his son 'Abd al-Rahmān in his house and then to his other son al-Mughīra, who became second in line to the throne. The taking of the oath was continued in the mosque in Cordoba where al-Mughīra remained for some days, receiving pledges of allegiance on the *minbar* (pulpit) of the mosque from the rest of the population. This public ceremonial was based directly on 'Abbasid models and reveals the increasing self-confidence and aspirations of the Umayyad amirs.

The reign of 'Abd al-Rahmān II, 822–52

About 30 years old, the new ruler was already experienced in political and military affairs, having led expeditions to Toledo and the northern frontiers. He was tall and slightly stooping; people noticed his wide, dark eyes and full, henna-died beard. He was to rule al-Andalus for 30 years from 822 to 852, and his reign saw the coming of age of al-Andalus in terms of developing the mechanisms of a mature Muslim state and a genuine indigenous Muslim culture. 'Abd al-Rahmān seems from the beginning to have tried to move away from his father's policy of repression and to be more responsive to Islamic susceptibilities. Even as his father was dying, he secured the execution of the commander of the Christian body-guard, al-Rabī', and the demolition of the wine market in Cordoba, and during his reign this concern was to be expressed in a renewed enthusiasm for the *jihād* and a programme of mosque building.

The administration became more formal and bureaucratic and took on the structures it retained until the end of Umayyad rule in the early eleventh century.²¹ At its head was the *hājib*, a word which

21. See Lévi-Provençal, *HEM*, i, pp. 256–9.

originally meant door-keeper or chamberlain, a meaning it retained in the Islamic east. In Cordoba, however, the *hājib* was effectively the prime minister, holding his own court or *majlis* at the palace gate where messengers or petitioners would report. Below him were the *wazirs*: in the east, the *wazīr* of the 'Abbasid caliphate was the chief administrator and head of the civil servants (*kuttāb*, sing. *kātib*) who ran the bureaucracy. In al-Andalus, the *wazirs* were much more general purpose officials who might well lead an army or govern a city, and the term was sometimes used as an honorary title. There was also a degree of overlap and the *hājib* could also be a *wazīr*. Under 'Abd al-Rahmān the *wazirs* were given salaries of 300 *dinārs*. The Amir also had a personal secretary (*kātib*) who was often one of his closest advisers. A *diwān* (administrative office) was organised to arrange the collection of taxes, and the standard Muslim institutions of the *sikka*, to mint coins, and the *tirāz*, to provide the official textiles, were set up.

For the first part of his reign he continued to make use of his father's advisers. The veteran 'Abd al-Karīm b. 'Abd al-Wāhid b. Mughīth seems to have maintained his position as chief army commander and *hājib* as he had been for the previous two reigns, but after his death on campaign against the Christians in 824 his family seems to have disappeared from the scene. His place in the administration was taken by 'Isā b. Shuhayd, famous for his incorruptibility, who became *wazīr* and *hājib* from 833 onwards and also commanded the horse at the time of the Viking attack on Seville in 844. 'Abd al-Rahmān had gathered a number of trusted intimates in the years when he was heir apparent, among them Sufyān b. 'Abd Rabbihi, a Berber of obscure origins who became his *kātib*, and 'Abd Allāh b. Sinān, who rebuilt the walls of Seville after the Viking attack. From a military point of view, the most important of these newcomers were the two brothers, 'Abd al-Rahmān and Muḥammad b. Rustam. These were scions of the Rustamid dynasty of Tahert (in Algeria) and were the first of many North African princelings brought over with their followers to serve the rulers of al-Andalus, Muḥammad particularly distinguishing himself against the Vikings. In the second half of his reign, 'Abd al-Rahmān came to rely increasingly on the eunuch Nasr, the first, but no means the last, eunuch to achieve major political influence in al-Andalus.

The simple household of 'Abd al-Rahmān I was gradually transformed into the formal court of 'Abd al-Rahmān II, with its courtiers sheltering a secluded and remote monarch who rarely appeared to his subjects. The Amir surrounded himself with a growing number

of eunuchs and slave girls. This development of the court on eastern models had a cultural aspect to it as well. In this the Umayyads were helped by the catastrophe which overwhelmed the 'Abbasid court between the outbreak of civil war in 811 and the final entry of al-Ma'mūn to Baghdad in 819: palaces were looted and burned and talented poets turned out on the streets. Among these was one 'Alī b. Nāfi', called Ziryāb. He was an Iraqi who had studied under the greatest of the early 'Abbasid singers, Ishāq al-Mawsilī. According to the Andalucian story, he was forced to leave the 'Abbasid court because of his master's jealousy and, after a spell in North Africa, he arrived in al-Andalus in 822. Here he set himself up not only as a musician but as an arbiter of taste in dress and food, remaining the uncontested Beau Brummell (the analogy is Lévi-Provençal's) of Cordovan society until his death in 857. Whatever the political vicissitudes of the reign, this period marks the first age of Andalucian culture, silver if not golden. Apart from al-Hakam II, 'Abd al-Rahmān was the most intellectual of the Umayyad sovereigns and encouraged scholars and poets, including the eccentric scientist 'Abbās b. Firnās who, among other things, made himself wings and attempted to fly. Nor must 'Abd al-Rahmān's building work be forgotten. Apart from military architecture, there was the surviving extension of the mosque at Cordoba and the mosque at Seville, fragments of which can still be found in the court of the church of San Salvador, and a mosque at Jaen. Of course these buildings had a political value: just like the *jihād*, his commitment to mosque building showed the Amir as a truly Muslim ruler.

Perhaps the most picturesque indication of Cordoba as the heir of Baghdad is given in the story of the necklace of al-Shifā'. This necklace had been made for Zubayda, wife of Hārūn al-Rashīd, and during the dispersal of 'Abbasid treasures during the civil wars which followed that caliph's death in 809, it was bought for 10,000 *dīnārs* by 'Abd al-Rahmān's agents and given by him to his favourite, al-Shifā'. With the collapse of the caliphate of Cordoba it passed to the Dhū'l-Nūnids of Toledo. After El Cid took Valencia in 1095, the necklace was handed over to him and given to his wife Jimena. It later appears among the possessions of Don Alvaro de Luna, Constable of Castile, and may even have been worn by Isabella the Catholic before it finally disappeared from record. Whether history or romance, the story of the necklace is symbolic of the changing fortunes of Baghdad and Cordoba, 'Abbasids and Umayyads, in this period.²²

The Amir had to cope with troubles in the area of Tudmīr in the east of the country. The old treaty arrangements of the time of the conquest had broken down and that meant that Arab settlers were competing for lands. They divided as ever into Muḍar and Yemen and fought not the government but each other. There was anarchy for seven years before the Yemen chief Abū'l-Shammākh Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Judhāmī finally surrendered to 'Abd al-Rahmān. He pacified the area in two ways: he offered Abū'l-Shammākh a position in his army, where we find him guarding Calatrava during one of the campaigns against Toledo, and he caused his governor to build a new capital, the city of Murcia, founded in 831, in which an Umayyad garrison could be stationed.

Two other notable events distinguish the reign of 'Abd al-Rahmān. The first of these was the Viking attack on Seville. In the summer of 844 (229), 80 Viking ships, having been driven away from Lisbon by the local governor, sailed up the Guadalquivir river, as they had sailed up so many other western European estuaries and, basing themselves on the island now known as the Isla Menor, attacked the unwalled city of Seville. This they looted and pillaged and, finding that the Guadalquivir was not navigable any higher, took to the land. 'Abd al-Rahmān, forewarned by the governor of Lisbon, acted swiftly and effectively: troops were summoned from all areas and even the recalcitrant Mūsā b. Mūsā b. Qasi led his followers from the Upper March. The Umayyad armies under Muḥammad b. Rustam and the eunuch Nasr decisively defeated the invaders in a land battle; many were killed and most of the rest returned to their ships and fled. Some, however, remained and settled in the lower Guadalquivir area, where they converted by and by to Islam and lived reformed and blameless lives, selling cheeses to the Sevillanos.

The episode shows the effectiveness of the Cordovan state when faced with an unexpected attack by an unknown enemy, and it is only fair to contrast this swift mobilisation with the feeble and chaotic response of Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian contemporaries. The long-term response was equally effective. Seville was walled and a naval arsenal (*dār al-ṣinā'a*) established there which certainly frustrated further raids in 859 and 966. There were, of course, other reasons why the Vikings were not the menace in al-Andalus that they were in Britain or France. It lay further from their lands of origin and the lack of navigable rivers meant that they were unable to penetrate deeply into the country. The Vikings were defeated because they were fighting inland; if they had been able to bring their longships right up to Cordoba when they first arrived, the result might have been very different. As it was, the invasions which did so much

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